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The magazine about comic book professionals

MICHAEL WILLIAM KALUTA



No. 7 • Summer 1999

MICHAEL KALUTA

WITH
CONTRIBUTIONS

BY

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Mike Mignola

Mike Pascale

Dave Stevens

Ronn Sutton

Charles Vess

Al Williamson

Barry Windsor-Smith

Bernie Wrightson

FROM THE PUBLISHER

Welcome to our summer issue. As you've noticed, we've changed the look of our cover. For some time now, we've been considering going to a full-color cover, and have been polling our readers. Your responses were overwhelmingly in favor of the status quo. Then we polled our retailers, the majority of whom again thought we should keep our two-color cover. However, some pointed out that the current cover may be perceived less favorably by some. So, we took all that information into consideration, and set about improving our look without increasing our cover price. We hope you like it! Thank you to everyone who provided us with feedback about our cover questions, from our readers to retailers. We appreciate you taking the time to provide us with different perspectives. Keep it up!

And keep your suggestions for future issues coming. We do keep track of your requests and try to schedule the issues according to who you want to see. A writer that we have had many requests for is Chris Claremont and he will be the subject of our next issue.

The Archie Goodwin Tribute issue we've been working on is in the final stages, and will be available in July. All proceeds from this issue will benefit the Archie Goodwin Memorial Scholarship at the School of Visual Arts in NYC. At press time those contributing to the issue include: Terry Austin, James Robinson, Paul Chadwick, Jeph Loeb, Paul Levitz, Denny O'Neil, Mike Carlin, Walt Simonson, Louise Simonson, Al Williamson, Kurt Busiek, Gene Colan, John Workman, Mark Wheatley, Carl Gafford, Paul Davis, Link Yaco, Fred Hembeck, and Mike Pascale.

Thanks to everyone who contributed to this issue: Paul Chadwick, Joel Goss, Lurene Haines, Fred Hembeck, Steve Hickman, Jeff Jones, Elaine Lee, Mike Mignola, Mike Pascale, Dave Stevens, Ronn Sutton, Charles Vess, Al Williamson, Barry Windsor-Smith, and Bernie Wrightson. Also, thanks to everyone that contributed art from their personal collections for this issue: Terry Austin, John Fanucchi, Greg Huneryager, Dave Morris, Albert Moy, Mike Pascale, Ethan Roberts, Benno Rothschild, Mike Shields, and Michael Kaluta.

I'd especially like to thank Michael Kaluta, who besides being one of the nicest guys in comics, provided a great deal of assistance with this issue. Thanks, Michael.

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FEATURES

Michael Kaluta.....4

How Michael Kaluta Creates Comics...20

Michael Kaluta and The Shadow.....22

Joel Goss.....26

Ronn Sutton.....26

Studio Talk.....41

Stories of The Studio

Jeff Jones.....28, 34

Charles Vess.....32, 34

Barry Windsor-Smith..29, 36

Bernie Wrightson.....30, 35

Supporting Interviews

*Friends and associates reflect on Michael Kaluta and his
contributions to the industry*

Paul Chadwick.....43

Lurene Haines.....46

Stephen Hickman.....38

Elaine Lee.....40

Mike Mignola.....48

Dave Stevens.....46

Al Williamson.....39

From The Publisher.....1

Timeline.....5

Mike's Meanderings.....52

Who Are They?.....53

What's On Deck?.....54

Letters.....56

Hembeck's Final Thoughts.....58



The Shadow from *Marvel Graphic Novel* #35, "The Shadow: Hitler's Astrologer."
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PROFILE

MICHAEL WILLIAM KALUTA

Since your parents were in the military when you were growing up, I assume you moved around a lot when you were a child?

A lot . . . but the only time we actually lived out of the country was when I was born. My parents were stationed in the Panama Zone. We spent about six months in Guatemala, then moved to Texas, then Louisiana. I was about two when we were in Baton Rouge. Afterwards, we moved to Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts and Pennsylvania. From Pennsylvania, we moved to Alabama for a year. Then we went to Virginia and that's where my parents stayed.

How old were you when you made it to Virginia?

Let's see, it was the sixth grade so I guess I was twelve.

Are you an only child?

Oh no. During all of the moving around I had my two sisters to share the back seat with: one older, Joan, and one younger, Jean. Then my brother Roman was born in Alabama, and John was born in Virginia, near Washington, D.C.

When you were growing up were you a comic book fan?

I can't say I was a fan of the *books*. I was a fan of the stories. I read a lot of Archie Comics and Dell Comics, like *Baby Huey*, *Little Lulu*, and *Richie Rich*. I read and enjoyed *G.I. Combat* and the other DC Comics war books, though I never did understand the dinosaur stories in *Star-Spangled War Stories*. I thought those fantasy war stories were the worst stuff, then. Basically, if there was a comic book lying around I would pick it up and read it — well, not read it so much as dive into it. I became much more of a book reader when I found the

TIMELINE

M i c h a e l K a l u t a

- 1947** Michael William Kaluta born on August 25, Guatemala City, Guatemala.
- 1966** Michael enters the Richmond Professional Institute majoring in fine arts.
- 1967** He attends the SCRAP convention in New York City and meets Bernie Wrightson, Frank Frazetta, and Roy Krenkel, among others.
- 1969** Michael starts working in comics. During this year, he assists Al Williamson, has several assignments from Charlton Comics, and (along with Jeff Jones) assists Bernie Wrightson on *Showcase* #83 and #84. *Showcase* #83 is released in June of 1969; the first of the Charlton stories, appearing in *Teen Confessions* #59, is published in December.
- 1971** *House of Secrets* #92 is published. This issue contains the first Swamp Thing story. In addition to assisting Bernie Wrightson on the issue, the villain in the story is modelled after Michael.
- 1969** Michael begins working on "Carson of Venus," which appears as a back-up feature in *Korak, Son of Tarzan*.
- 1973** Michael starts collaborating with Denny O'Neil on *The Shadow* for DC Comics.
- 1976** Michael joins Jeff Jones, Barry Windsor-Smith, and Bernie Wrightson in forming The Studio.
- 1979** Michael meets Elaine Lee; they will eventually collaborate on *Starstruck*.
- 1985** *Starstruck* is published by Marvel Comics.
- 1988** Collaborating once again with Denny O'Neil, Michael returns to The Shadow with *The Shadow: Hitler's Astrologer*, which is published in *Marvel Graphic Novel* #35.
- 1993** The *Michael Wm. Kaluta Sketchbook* is published. Michael also co-plots a Shadow story that is published by Dark Horse Comics. This is the first of several collaborations with Joel Goss.
- 1994** Michael produces a J.R.R. Tolkein calendar.
- 1996** Michael's first cover for *The Books of Magic* is released.
- 1998** *Minidoka, 937th Earl of One Mile, Series M* written by Edgar Rice Burroughs is released by Dark Horse Comics.



Cover from *Tarzan: Le Monstre*, published by Dark Horse Comics.

Tarzan © & TM 1999 Edgar Rice Burroughs, Inc. All rights reserved.

Edgar Rice Burroughs Mars and Venus stories in about 1962. That put a stop to my comic book reading until I began finding the older 1940's and 1950's comic books in friends' collections.

What was your favorite Burroughs story?

If it had Edgar Rice Burroughs' name on it, I read it and enjoyed it. My reading Edgar Rice Burroughs' stories was really a life raft. There was nothing else interesting in life nor literature as far as I was concerned. I had read a couple of Tarzan books when I was much younger but years later I didn't remember I had until my father pointed it out. Later, a friend gave me one of the Mars books, I think it was *Llana of Gathol*. He said, "I think you'll like this." And I did. A lot! I went out and got every other ERB book I could get my hands on and haunted the book and magazine stores waiting for the next paperback to hit the stands. His Mars series was my absolute favorite, followed by the Venus series. I found *The Moon Men*

the most remarkable of his stories. The main character dies. I'd read as many as 30 Edgar Rice Burroughs' books before I got to *The Moon Men*. That story element was kind of a shock.

Did you begin drawing at an early age?

Yes, I did. It was probably the John Gnagy "Learn To Draw" TV show in 1957 that showed me what could be done with drawing. I had a fun time absorbing the lessons. I know the show was on every week, but to me it seemed to be on every day. I suppose a formative precursor to that was a kid's TV show called *Winky Dink*. Do you remember that?

Was that the show where you actually put plastic onto the TV screen so you could write on it?

Yeah, if you had it. I remember I was expecting something a little more high tech in the mail than just the TV screen size piece of clear plastic that I received. But there it was, fold lines and all. My parents were happier with us drawing on the plastic than our drawing onto the actual TV screen.

From what I remember, you had to help Winky Dink out.

Right. You had to draw a stairway or a door for him to go through, or a ladder or a bridge to walk up or over to complete a story. If you didn't draw the ladder or the bridge, he walked up or over thin air but it was still an interactive experience.

When did you first think that the art would be your life's work?

Towards the end of junior high school. I guess I had been reading science fiction before that: Tom Swift, Andre Norton, etc. It was the drawings on the covers of the Ace Edgar Rice Burroughs' paperback books by Roy Krenkel and Frank Frazetta that really got me started on the road to being a fantasy illustrator. I learned many years later that some of my favorite Krenkel paintings were actually by Frank Frazetta, aping Roy Krenkel's style. Roy had choked on one or two assignments and handed them off to Frank. Eventually Roy told Ace to hire Frank, saying "... after all, he's been doing them, anyway." ERB's *Fighting Man Of Mars* is one of the Frazetta "Roy Krenkel" covers. The little pen drawings on the flyleaf inside of each book were sometimes more of a

MICHAEL



KALUTA

treat than the cover. Being in black and white, they were so evocative, so full of potential. I hadn't seen a lot of interesting black and white drawings since I had read *Pinocchio* as a kid, amazed at the illustrations. It was really through reading Edgar Rice Burroughs and copying the Krenkel and Frazetta drawings that I started to form any kind of idea that I could draw pictures for a living. When I was in high school, I was trying to draw like Roy Krenkel and, at the same time, mix his imagery with the John Gnagy instructions. Soon I was to add Alphonse Mucha, the Czech art nouveau master, and Aubrey Beardsley's influences to my early scribbings.

In 1965, between high school and college, I met Steve Hickman's mother while I was working in the art supply department at The Hecht Company department store selling art supplies to Sunday painters. She told me her son drew very much like I did. One day Steve came up to the store with his drawings. We shared an hour or two of delight in each other's accomplishments and we've been following through ever since. We ended up going to college together and attacking the fan and professional art world as colleagues.

Through Steve, I met Steve Harper, who was also very much an Edgar Rice Burroughs fan. Through Steve Harper, Hickman and I got to see older artwork like the original Tarzan and Mars covers by J. Allen St. John. I can remember the day Harper turned me on to Al Williamson's Flash Gordon work, then pointed me to Al's EC Comics material. Harper showed me Will Eisner's *Spirit Comics* in the new Harvey comics version. Harper was a fountain of old illustrator knowledge. His grandfather had collected the original pulp magazines, storing them in the attic of Harper's home. What a library! With Harper pointing out these older artists' work, it was easy to see there was already quite a trail blazed in the fantasy art direction. Understand, this was before the present day plethora of terrific art books covering these old illustrators were published. One needed to know a collector to learn about What Had Gone Before!

You eventually did some collaborations with Krenkel, didn't you?

Yes, I did.

That must have been a lot of fun because he was one of the artists . . .

He was the guy, basically, that I got my line approach from, with some influence from Aubrey Beardsley. It was looking at Roy's drawings, the inside pages of the Ace Burroughs books, that made me want to draw pictures. Up to that point, I had been drawing but with no focus. Reading Burroughs was exciting and seeing those drawings added so much more excitement. The combo of Roy Krenkel and ERB really was the pebble that made all the ripples in my pond. Years later, when Roy asked me to do some work with him, I was floored! Just hanging out with the guy was a treat. He had an absolutely terrific personality; it filled up the room. Life was a lot more fun when Roy was around. The first thing we worked on together was a book he was illustrating called *Sowers of the Thunder*, a Robert E. Howard book to be published by Don Grant. Roy had placed hundreds of illustrations throughout the book, sometimes three little ones on a page surrounded by text. He showed up at my apartment one day with his big drawings, the full-page illustrations, each with tracing paper taped on top of them. He asked me to drop shadows underneath the figures. This is stuff he could do, but he said he wasn't so secure in his results. Anybody studying his work would never guess he was insecure about doing any of it. But he said that I — and guys like me, such as Jeff Jones and Bernie Wrightson — could just do the stuff so easily that he worked so hard to do. He said he'd much rather have me just indicate where these dropped shadows were and he would then do the finished work himself. So I never actually touched the originals, but I did do little pencil marks all over the tracing paper on top. Years later, he had been illustrating a Lin Carter book titled *As The Green Star Rises*. The story was told in the style of Edgar Rice Burroughs. Roy had drawn up, in pencil, several beautiful full-page illustrations, but he said he really didn't feel he could finish them. They had to be done quickly to meet the deadline. I found I could not allow myself to touch his drawings. I traced off his drawings, using a light box, then inked my tracings. There was one drawing called for in the text that he hadn't done a pencil for. I did the drawing myself from idea to finish, but I signed both our names: it was in the Krenkel style, after all!



Illustration by Krenkel and Kaluta from
As The Green Star Rises

A thought I had then: if I could go back in time, back to the young Michael Kaluta studying Roy's drawings in the Edgar Rice Burroughs books in 1965 . . . to be this stranger knocking at the door . . . to hand this book to that young Kaluta showing his name and Roy Krenkel's name on the same artwork — well, what a concept! It would be one of those Ray Bradbury time-travel experiences.

After high school you attended Virginia Commonwealth University?

After graduating from high school, I took a year off. In the following year, 1966, I attended Richmond Professional Institute, in Richmond, Virginia. Originally a trade school, it had become a college some years before. Besides Fine Arts and Commercial Arts, it had a thriving Business and Social Work curriculum. It subsequently became Virginia Commonwealth University in the 1970's when it merged with The Medical College of Virginia. I attended RPI in

the Fine Arts program. I originally tried to get into their Commercial Art program, thinking that Commercial Art was what I was doing when trying to illustrate the Edgar Rice Burroughs stories. Their Commercial Art program did not include illustration at the time, and today I'm really glad I ended up in their Fine Arts school. I can't say that I excelled in the Fine Art side of things but some of their teaching made an impression on me. I would say that my compositional sense is based on what I learned there, in spite of myself. The instructors had a way of showing how to draw a shape on a piece of paper so you'd be thinking in three dimensions while drawing in two. They gave us a lot of hand and eye exercises. The exercises carved the inside of my mind, developing spatial skills without being subject specific. They concentrated on concept. When I applied these concepts to my fantasy work, the drawing and thinking behind the drawing became so much better. With that training, and being influenced by the Krenkel, Beardsley and Mucha work, I developed a style that I have used all my life.

How many years did you go to school in Richmond?

I spent two years there, from 1966 to 1968. In the back of the *Metropolis* book I illustrated, the editors wrote a bio in which I graduated from RPI/VCU. But I never did. I don't suppose the alumni association of VCU has seen that Bio, else the phone would be ringing off the hook.

It was around that time that you got your first professional comic book work?

Yes, it was at the New York convention of 1968. Phil Seuling showed my work to Al Williamson, the EC Comics Sci-Fi Master. Al Williamson asked if I would be interested in taking a short seven-page story he'd been given for DC Comics' *House of Mystery*, expand it to about twelve pages, and add a lot more of what he called "Boots and Monsters." So I did, not that I knew at all what I was doing. Al has my original pencil pages somewhere. If he ever gets upset with me, he'll make certain that they get published; they're really awful. Al was very sweet about my clumsy work. He took what he could from it and applied it to the finished job. The following January, 1969, I stayed at his place in upstate New York for about three weeks. I helped a little bit on his daily

MICHAEL



KALUTA

strip, *Secret Agent Corrigan*, which was quite a learning experience. Under his tutelage, I learned much more than I had ever hoped to know, about everything. I was amazed. Al's a consummate professional and knows all the tricks and loves to share them with the "new guys." One of his jokes: he'd say, "You see that stack of paper over there? I've had that stack for thirty years . . . Marsh Board . . . they don't make that paper anymore. When that paper's gone, I'll have to quit." And I thought to myself, "Strathmore paper (the paper I started using in 1969) is perfect stuff. Maybe I should take a lesson from this." If I had a big stack of that 1969 Strathmore paper now, I'd hoard it just like he hoarded his Marsh Board. The paper they make today is crap compared to that paper. The ink doesn't go on it the same way, the color certainly doesn't go on it the same way. That was, of course, Al's point, the knowledge in the joke. Paper isn't as good as it used to be and pen points aren't made the way they used to be. It's been a downhill spiral since the beginning of time. (So young artists, grab *piles* of whatever works for you, now!)



Did that story you helped Al Williamson on ever see print?

Yes, the story is entitled "The Beautiful Beast." It appeared in *House of Mystery* # 185. Al used two panels out of what I'd done before visiting him, because he liked the layouts. During the weeks I was at his studio we worked on a few pages together. He wanted one page to have a big temple on it, a long distance shot. I laid the thing out, spending hours on the building. Al let me ink the backgrounds on that page and the next. Most of the time, I would look over his shoulder, watching him ink. I forget what brand pen point he used, but he made it do magical things. I asked if I could try it. I wasn't watching his face when he said yes but he was probably smirking, because he knew quite well what was going to happen. It was such a loose, subtle pen point a guy really had to have phenomenal control to make it do anything. Al was born with phenomenal control, took it from there and developed his talent. He's always had a light touch. When I put the same pen that Al made razor-fine lines with onto the paper, it was like I was using a magic marker — it went *blah* all over the place. Quite a humbling experience, but a challenging one as well. Every day during that time I learned something new about how to approach the work and how to get it done. Al was very comfortable talking with other artists, putting us at our ease. He let it be known that there were certain things that he couldn't do everyday. He'd say, "I can't draw this thing right here." And he'd go and work and struggle with it. That was relaxing to a young guy — I couldn't draw anything right the first, second or third time! It seemed as if whatever I accomplished ended up on the paper by luck. To see Al pretend to struggle with something really made my day.

How long did you stay up there?

Three weeks. I was Bernie Wrightson's roommate at the time and one morning he called me back to New York City. A script had arrived for me from Charlton Comics. Earlier, Al had talked to Dick Giordano, at that time a new editor at DC Comics who had recently come from Charlton. Dick recommended me to the boss at Charlton and the boss decided to give me a shot on a little three page story. Charlton Comics eventually gave me two more very

Williamson and Kaluta from *House of Mystery* #185.
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small stories to pencil. This first story was "The Great Battles of History: The Battle of Shiraz." The second was titled "Off The Beach," a romance story, and the third was "The Amazons of Reeds Crossing," a little western thing. After I had done the pencils on the Shiraz story, Charlton claimed to have lost them. After I pencilled and inked the romance and western stories, they found the pencils for the Shiraz story. I think they'd held onto the Shiraz pencils hoping I would turn out to be a terrific Romance or Western artist . . . those stories being their mainstays. History shows I was neither! By the time I had finished those three stories, June of 1969, I had little bits of work at DC Comics, Web of Horror and other places. I never worked at Charlton's offices, nor met the boss. They were way out of town and used a drop in Manhattan, an office I'd leave the originals in and pick them up again, days later. I talked on the phone with the editor and received checks through the mail. They paid twenty dollars a page: pencils and inks.

The first story, was that the story that appeared in Flash Gordon # 18?

Yes, it was a three page historical story with horses in it. I couldn't draw a horse to save my life. I faked it and I don't know that I faked it very well.

The romance story [which appeared in True Confessions #59] was the first of the three Charlton published?

Yes. While I was waiting for them to be published, I got a two page "mystery" story from Dick Giordano at DC Comics — a company I was *much* keener to work for. I had also done some background work with Bernie [Wrightson] on the Nightmaster stories for *Showcase* [#83 and #84]. This was all taking place at the same time. According to this little accounting book I have, which Bernie's dad told me to keep, the first money that came in was inking for Nightmaster and then forty dollars for penciling on the "Battle of Shiraz."

So you have a book of all the work you've done?
Yup.

And it was Bernie's dad who suggested it?

Yeah. He showed me how to do it. I have a column for who gave me the job, one for what the job was, the amount, and the date. It's all here from 1969 to 1999.

Why did he think it was important?

It was for tax purposes. Freelance artists don't have money withheld from their wages; they get the entire amount and it's up to them to square taxes with the government.

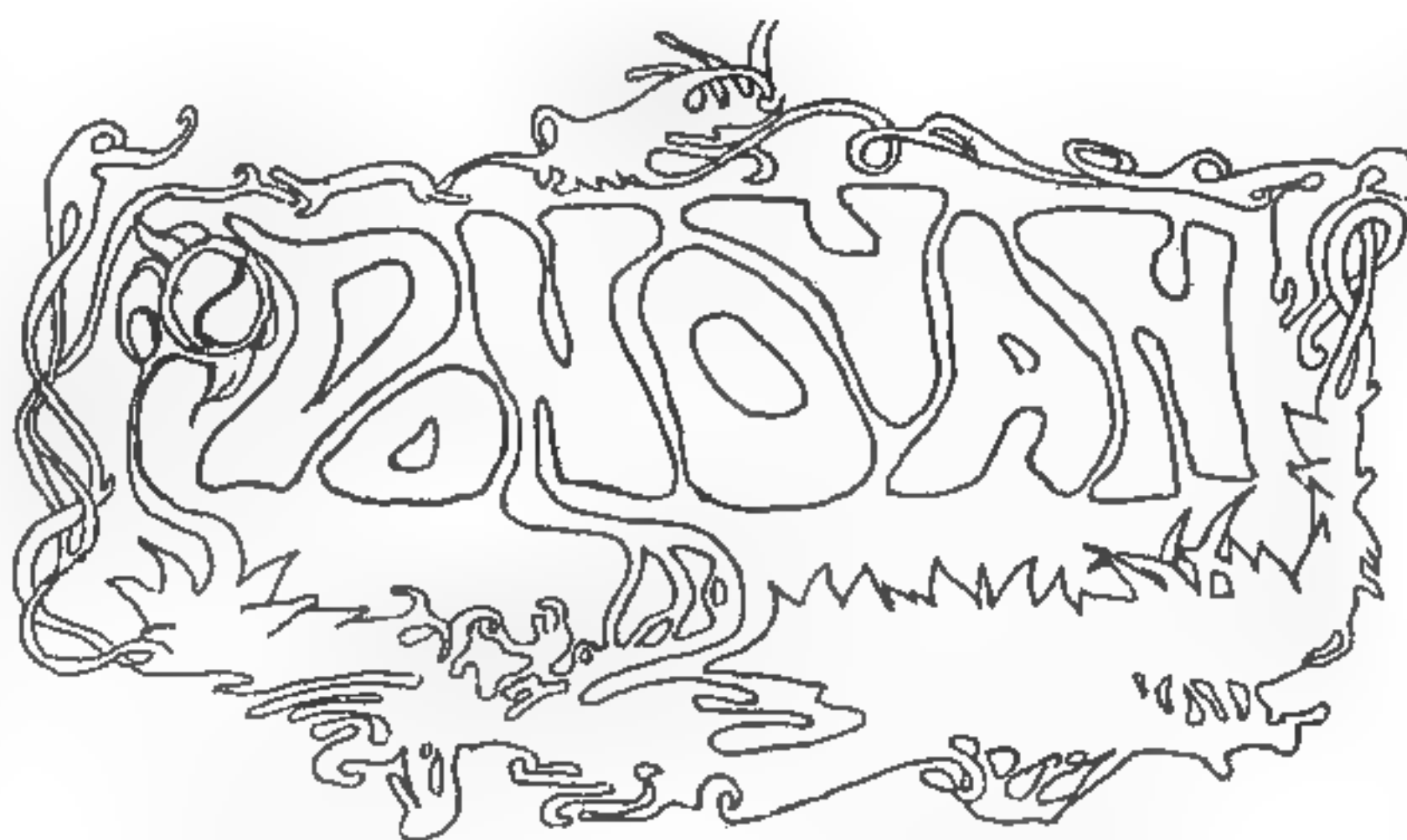
You met Bernie at the 1967 convention in New York?

Yes. The SCARP Convention. I can't remember anymore what SCARP stands for. Um . . . "Society of Cartoon Art and Rippdee Pipdee . . ." Hmmm . . . It seemed a HUGE affair. The convention dealer's room was *vast* . . . or so it felt. Recently, at a convention in the same hotel, I was standing in the back of one of the little rooms set aside for

the panel discussions, listening and looking around. Then it struck me. I grabbed Steve Hickman, pointed around and said, "HEY!!! This is the huge room where we met Phil Seuling and Bernie Wrightson . . ." We looked around again — what a dinky little out-of-the-way hole in the wall! [laughs] The tricks memory plays. I do remember a highlight of the SCARP Con 1967 was that The Edgar Rice Burroughs Fan Club people were there, having their annual Dum-Dum. They'd invited both Harold Foster and Frank Frazetta. Knowing those GODS were somewhere in attendance was the real spice to the event!

Why did you attend?

I had been working in fanzines very briefly with Tom



Donavan drawing done while in college.
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MICHAEL



KALUTA



Eyes of Mars® & TM 1999 Michael Kaluta. All rights reserved.

Long, who was doing *Graphic Showcase* in Richmond. Through a collection of Tom's fanzines, I met two fellows in Chicago, Rich Hauser and Helmut Mueller, publishers of *Spa-Fon*, an EC Comics Fanzine. Tom had lent me a copy of *Spa-Fon* #1. There was a story in there that had a really bad illustration. I wrote Rich and Helmut a letter telling them the art in their magazine stunk and they should hire me. Years later, Rich showed me the letter I'd written. I was shocked I had that much nerve and so little modesty. I didn't know I was that kind of guy. [laughs] At least I had illustrated the pushy note with warriors and demons. Rich sent back an enthusiastic letter and I started working on "The Hole in Space" comic strip story for *Spa-Fon* while I was doing the "Eyes of Mars" strip for Tom's *Graphic Showcase*. Rich and Helmut said to look for them at the convention in New York City. Steve Harper lived up in Boston, Steve Hickman lived near me in Northern Virginia and we decided, "Let's go!" It was through the Chicago *Spa-Fon* boys that we got to meet Frank Frazetta and, at the same time,

my original hero, Roy Krenkel.

Around the time you were starting out, you, Bernie, Jeff Jones and Bruce Jones self-published a book called The Abyss.

That was in 1970, after I'd moved to NYC and Bernie and I had moved into the big building that Jeff Jones and family lived in.

*From what I've read, that was a bit of a disappointment. Just from a monetary standpoint. The book looked pretty cool. We had some delusions of grandeur and we expected to have a lot of issues out and expected there to be a lot of money. There was some talk about a self-publishing empire without ever having done the first thing. Basically, we ended up with stacks and stacks and stacks of these *Abyss* art prints we'd done to sell to make money to publish the book. The book finally got published and the printers delivered half as many as they said they were going to. All the work in *Abyss* #1 ended up getting re-*

published in other places over the years. The stacks and stacks of *Abyss* art prints eventually ended up in a giant trash bin, is my guess. I know I don't have any.

You've done a lot of work outside of comic books, obviously. The book illustrations come to mind. With the exception of the most recent job, designing a CD-ROM game, nothing has brought in as much money as the comics, all told. Illustrating the books was fun, and very satisfying, but there never was the kind of money in illustrating that was in drawing comics.

Have you ever done any book illustrations of any of the Burroughs books?

The only Burroughs book I've illustrated just came out. It's called *Minidoka, 937th Earl of One Mile, Series M*, published by Dark Horse. It's an Edgar Rice Burroughs story just by the skin of its teeth. He wrote it way before he wrote any of his other, better known work. I don't believe it was ever meant to be published. It was meant to be given to one of his sons; it's kind of a kid's story, more of an Oz story, very tongue-in-cheek. It was fun to work on once I found its measure, but I'd still like to illustrate *Lost on Venus* or an *Ocher Sea-Bottom* Martian story.

How did the project come about?

I received a phone call from Dark Horse asking if I was interested, and a flattering letter from Bob Barrett, a big Edgar Rice Burroughs collector. Bob had been talking with Danton Burroughs [Edgar Rice Burroughs' grandson] about publishing this little *Minidoka* story for quite some time. Bob showed Danton Burroughs some of my line drawings and that turned the tide. They both

addressed Dark Horse saying, "We'd like Michael to illustrate this early unpublished work." I was very flattered. I got the word after publication that both Bob and Danton were pleased. The letter Bob sent me then is now a cherished item in my career papers. Having my name on the same spine as Edgar Rice Burroughs, well, that is something I have wanted since his writing took me off the planet and made me see my future.

Another book project you did was Thea von Harbou's Metropolis. When did you first read the book?

I read it around 1962 when Ace Books first published it in English. They released a little paperback with a blue and yellow Jack Gaughan cover. I picked it up because the blurb on the cover said it was the best science fiction story ever written. I started reading it and I just fell in love. It is not a book for everybody, but when it finds a kindred soul, that soul is gathered into the *Metropolis* Collective, never to leave. The purple prose was translated from German but the style of writing was retained. I've read it so often I was able to easily understand a German Edition I was shown in Frankfurt. Fifteen years after my first

reading, I finally saw the silent movie. At

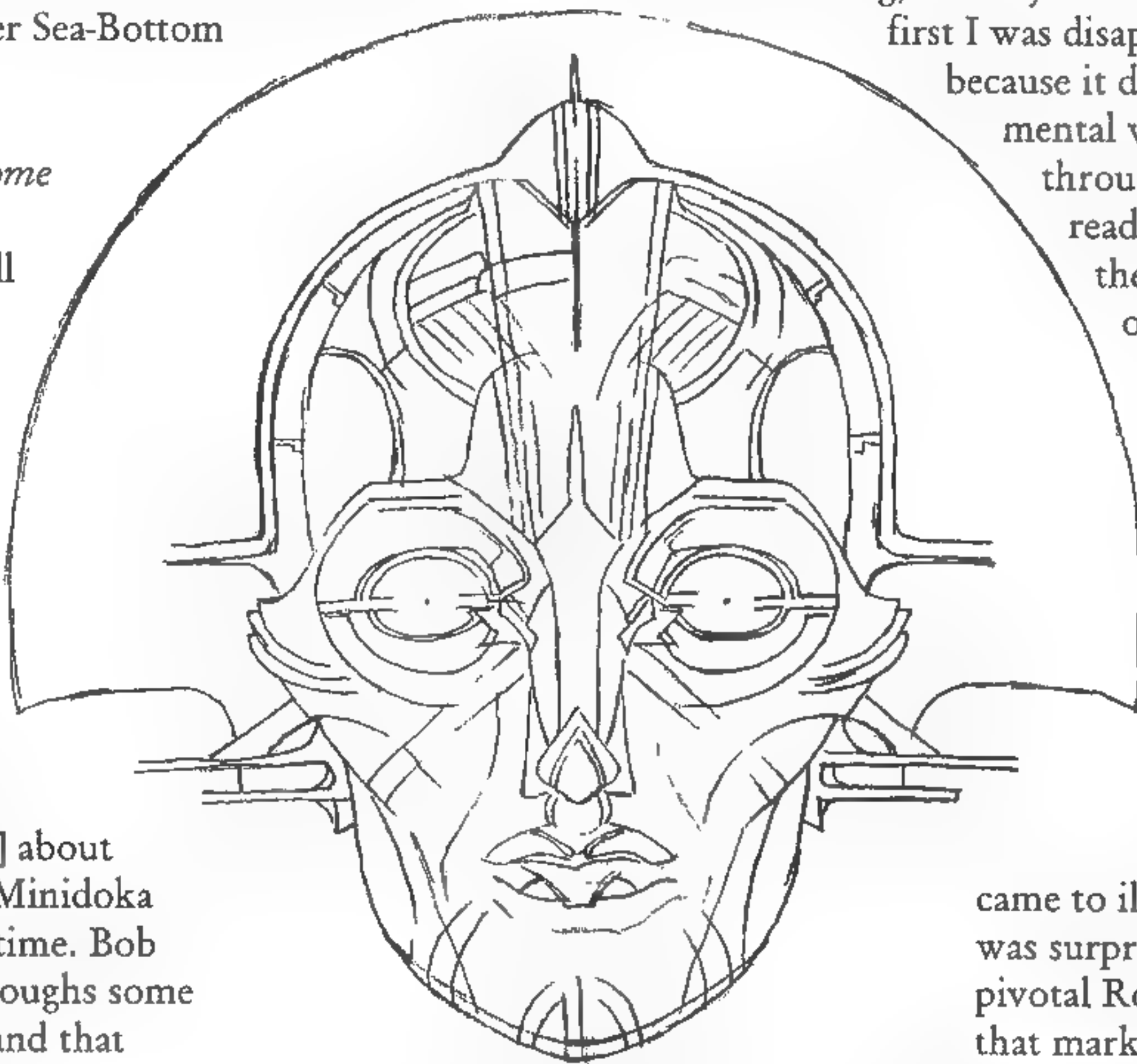
first I was disappointed in the film,

because it didn't match the mental visuals I'd built up

through the years of reading. But the force of the movie is such that it only took as long as I watched to see that what seemed

"funny" about the movie was the style of silent film storytelling. The movie and book melded together over the next several years, to the point that when I

came to illustrate the book, I was surprised to find that the pivotal Robot Transition Scene that marks the movie as so far ahead of its time, isn't actually



Preliminary drawing for *Metropolis*

MICHAEL



KALUTA

in the book — it happens off-stage. But so much of the book wasn't filmed, or was lost over the years, that I could easily re-illustrate the book and not have to duplicate any of the present illustrations.

Were you happy with the finished book?

I have one regret about that book: I asked them, "Once you lay the book out, you'll find you've got some blank space at the end of each chapter. Let me know how many spaces there are, on which chapters and I'll do line drawings to fill up the dead area." But because of timing or because they didn't want to bother, they never told me. As it is, if you flip through that book from front to back all your eye catches is blank pages. Every chapter end has one sentence at the top of the last page and this big blank piece of paper where a terrific line drawing should have been. That bothers me.

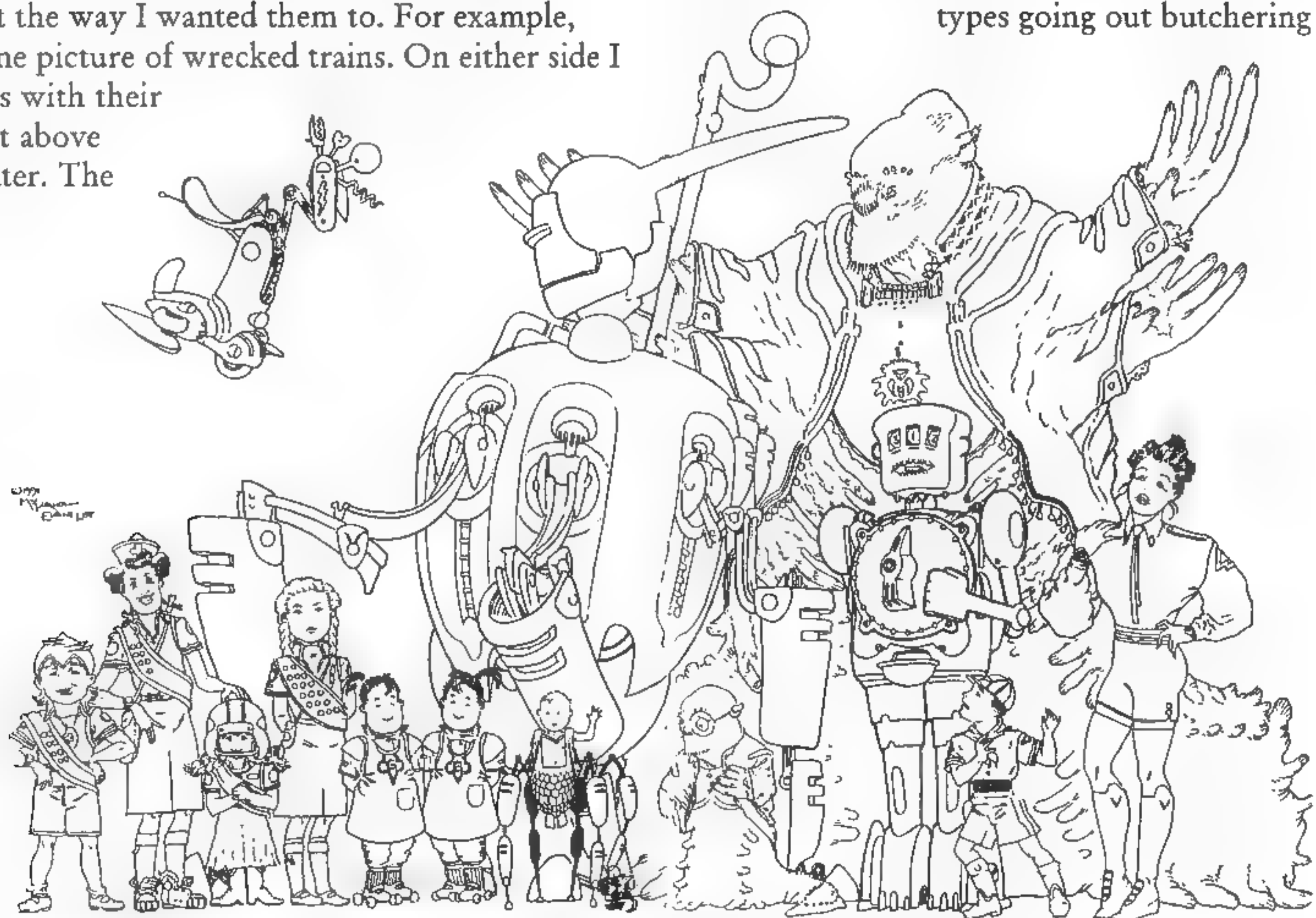
How long did it take you to do that project?

I'm not even sure. A year? More? I know it took a long time. Most of the pictures are successful, but, as usual, my mind only remembers the areas that didn't work out the way I wanted them to. For example, there's one picture of wrecked trains. On either side I drew kids with their heads just above rising water. The

idea of the drawing is fine, but the execution, well, it just didn't make it.

How did the Starstruck comic book come about?

The comic book is based on the play that Elaine Lee wrote in 1979. I met Elaine and her sister, Susan, in a restaurant, found out they were writing a science fiction play and offered to do their poster. Since *Starstruck*, the play, is an ensemble piece, I opted to put all of the characters onto the poster — that meant knowing what these characters would be wearing. Suddenly I was also the costume designer. Once the play had had its off-off Broadway run, Elaine optioned the rights to a producer. As time went on, she became impatient with the producer's non-involvement with pushing the property and looked through her contract to see what part of *Starstruck* wasn't optioned. The one thing that fell into that area was a comic book. I had gotten away from doing comic work at the time, disenchanted because they seemed to be regurgitating what was happening in the news. On two or three different projects, I had been given scripts which had to do with Manson-family types going out butchering



Galactic Girl Guides and Starstruck © & TM 1999 Elaine Lee and Michael

PROFILES

people. I was not interested. I had turned my talents to doing fantasy posters for Christopher Enterprises.

When Elaine and I looked at the play, to see how it could be developed into a comic book story, we had to admit the dialog-heavy play wouldn't translate to the static format of comics, not in America, anyway. Not ready to give up, Elaine looked inside the play. There are segments where each character talks about their past, reveals how they came to be who they are. Those passages were in the play because in every comic book Elaine had read, she'd noted the characters couldn't keep quiet about their pasts. We decided to approach the *Starstruck* story as episodes from each of the characters' past histories, slowly bringing them together, overlapping them, until the events of the play came about. As we went along, Elaine developed a style of comic book storytelling that was six or seven years before its time. We called the story approach "layered," where events did not happen chronologically. You'd read one story and get a sense of the characters, places and events; then another story would be told, starting before the previous story. Using a different viewpoint, this new story would show what you'd just read and understood to be one way was completely the opposite or at least very different. When the story point of view shifted to new characters, it would become their motivations and principals that took control.

There is more new art and story for *Starstruck* in the wings. I just have to get around to it. When we farmed *Starstruck* to Dark Horse for the black and white version, called "The Expanding Universe," we decided to add a lot of extra pages. The first four of these new books covered the Marvel graphic novel and first comic book from two years earlier, with an added one hundred pages of new material. As I finally draw the rest of the comic books, adding in all the new pages, we will total 600 finished story pages . . . 300 more than the previous version.

You said that you'd gotten away from comic books because you didn't want to keep doing Manson-like stories.

I became disenchanted with comics in 1975. The stories that were coming to me were not inspiring. At the same time, I was having a hard time drawing

— I was in some sort of a depression. I never called it such, but I really wasn't doing the kind of work that I had shown myself I could do. During the 1973-75 run on *The Shadow*, I was on again/off again: working real hard and then not working, getting frustrated and frustrating my editors. My work was purely mood driven and I thought at the time that I had to be "in the mood" to be an artist. I was told that no, that was an amateur's way of looking at it. I started to call myself a talented amateur. My work on *The Shadow* ended about the same time as my writing and drawing of the "Carson of Venus" back-up feature. Around the same time, I had one other comic book job, "Spawn of Frankenstein" in back of *Phantom Stranger*. It was the fourth "Spawn of Frankenstein" script that was the first of the Manson-type stories. I thought it wasn't all that good. I asked my editor, Joe Orlando, if there wasn't something we could do to punch it up. Either he decided to give me a break or he agreed with me. He gave the story over to another writer. The second version by the new writer was a near copy of the first, a very similar plot-line. I didn't understand why people were so caught up in reporting the news. Once again, it started off with a pretty girl on the side of the road, a guy picks her up, drives her into a cornfield and begins to rape her, she has a fight with him and runs away, or the Monster appears by accident and "rescues" her . . . I forget. The story ends up with her with this Manson-type family and the family turns out to be worse than the rapist was. I thought to myself, "Neal Adams could do a great job with this. It's real life." I wanted work where my talents lay, in drawing fantasy. At this time Christopher Enterprises came into my life, offering posters to design. My slow working habits continued into the poster work. By the time I met Elaine in September of 1979, I couldn't remember when I'd last drawn a comic book story. Between 1976 to 1979 I did mostly posters, photo prints, and album covers.

You worked on the Human Target TV series?

Yes. I was called by Danny Bilson and Paul DeMeo, the writers of the *Rocketeer* and producers/writers of the *Flash* (they now have a show called the *Sentinel* that's been doing fairly well on UPN). At the time they called up and asked if I could design an aircraft for a TV show, a flying wing. I said, "I certainly can." They wanted it to look modern, but retro. They



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THE HOUSE OF

MYSTERY



The cover to *House of Mystery* #294 was made by combining the above image with the shadow image on the next page.
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wanted it to be able to take off straight up and be big enough to carry a car inside. I hit the books, pulled bits and pieces from different aircraft references and eventually got the designs done. I was quite happy with the result. I used as much of the stealth technology as was available to the public at the time. I made a few mistakes where panels and hatch lines would cast quite a radar signature compared with the real Stealth Bomber. I did very detailed drawings and sent them off, figuring the plane would come back looking something like a toy boomerang. But they gave the design to the premier modeler in Hollywood, Greg Jein. Greg followed everything. Every dot that I put on my plane was on his model. I also designed a hand-held communicator device, with lenses inside. It could talk and project images and who knows what else. I also did a lot of design work on the interior of the airplane. But they didn't have a budget to build a new interior from scratch. When the show came out, everything I'd designed was used in the first episode; the wing looked magnificent, the hand-held communicator believable. I was delighted. Unfortunately, the

show only lasted six episodes.

You also worked on a movie that starred Christopher Lambert.

I worked on a movie *idea* that starred Christopher Lambert, or Jean-Claude VanDamme — the movie was never made. I did about two-thirds of the work before the production company stopped calling me. Eventually the work I generated will end up on my website. There are *a lot* of drawings and designs finished, but the movie will never get made. I've used some of the inspiration in other projects. The world of "Trooper" was very much "me." The writer/director, Christophe Gans, wanted my style. He liked the work I did on *The Shadow* comic, he loved the work I did on the *Metropolis* illustrations. Among many other sets, there was going to be a set, a hallway, in which my drawings from the *Metropolis* book would appear, painted very large in gray tones, as a backdrop for a terrific, futuristic gun battle. There were giant deco cities, gold-trimmed automobiles, huge brick-like rockets and unearthly battles between the stars. I was really hoping that it would work out. But, like too many design jobs I've done, it didn't.

That must get frustrating.

It would get really frustrating if it all happened quicker. What happens is I get involved in a project, the money is flowing, the good feelings are flowing, everybody's excited, the phone calls are nonstop, I get the work, I'm generating art, I'm faxing, I'm having meetings, and then, all of a sudden, there's this hollow, empty silence. If I'm lucky the void is quickly filled with another project. Recently I've been buried for three years working on a CD-ROM game, *The Secret of the Black Onyx*, and another game, called *Ragged Earth*, at least one of which will never see the light of day. I've done a lot of "hidden" work over the years. A film for Hollywood Pictures taking place in 1920's San Francisco, an animated 1930's detective story for late night TV, a Sci-Fi epic stage play/possible movie based on Captain's Courageous. People who like my work, seeing this stuff, would say, "Oh look, Kaluta did that." It's sad for me because they'll never see it. If the Onyx project doesn't go forward, the only place the designs will end up is in a book of my art or a web page. Working

MICHAEL



KALUTA

on a project, investing a lot of time, then having it not come out — well, it takes the wind out of my sails. It is especially tough when someone asks, “So, what have you been doing?” I can’t point to anything. I can tell them about it but there are no visuals to show until the project is actually produced. I’m crying in my beer here: understand, I’m not the only guy this happens to!

Besides the Books of Magic covers, what projects are you working on?

I’ve done a cover for the upcoming DC/Vertigo book called *Twitch*, a horror book edited by Axel Alonso. I’ve just finished working on a cover for *The Legends of the DC Universe*. The editors wanted a “Vertigo” look to it. It’s got two Teen Titans, Raven and Kid Flash, and Raven’s dad on the cover. I’ve got a cover in the works for a brilliant Time Travel Game, *The Continuum* (www.aetherco.com/continuum), and some spec work on a movie I can’t really talk about. I’m working on a Marvel pin-up/cover of Ororo as Blood Storm and a garage kit sculpture design of one of my own drawings. Besides those covers and projects, I’ve a pile of commissions and little things I owe to people from various conventions. I’m also doing my second CD album cover for Concrete Marketing . . . *Nativity In Black II*, a tribute to Black Sabbath. I did the first cover 5 years ago. While working on these things, I’m also holding my breath, wondering if work on the Onyx game is going to start up again.

*Can you tell us any information about the CD-ROM game, *The Secret of the Black Onyx*?*

I’ve been working on the game on and off for three and a half years. I was brought into the project by Roger Dean, the illustrator of the book *Views* and the Yes album covers. Roger admires my figure work. He wanted the characters in this game to have my figurative approach. The Onyx story takes place in a setting that looks like 10th century Russia with Viking influences. It’s actually, of course, another world all together. The first thing I did was bring in Elaine Lee as the writer, to gather all the disparate threads into a cohesive story. I spent 6 months of 1998 in San Francisco working on bringing the thing to completion. The demo for the game was completed at the end of January 1999. Everyone who has seen

and played the demo has been impressed. Folks can see a little bit of the art and design at www.blueplanetsoftware.com . . . just click on ONYX.

Of all the things you’ve done, in all the different media you’ve done, which one stands out as being your favorite? That you’re the most proud of?

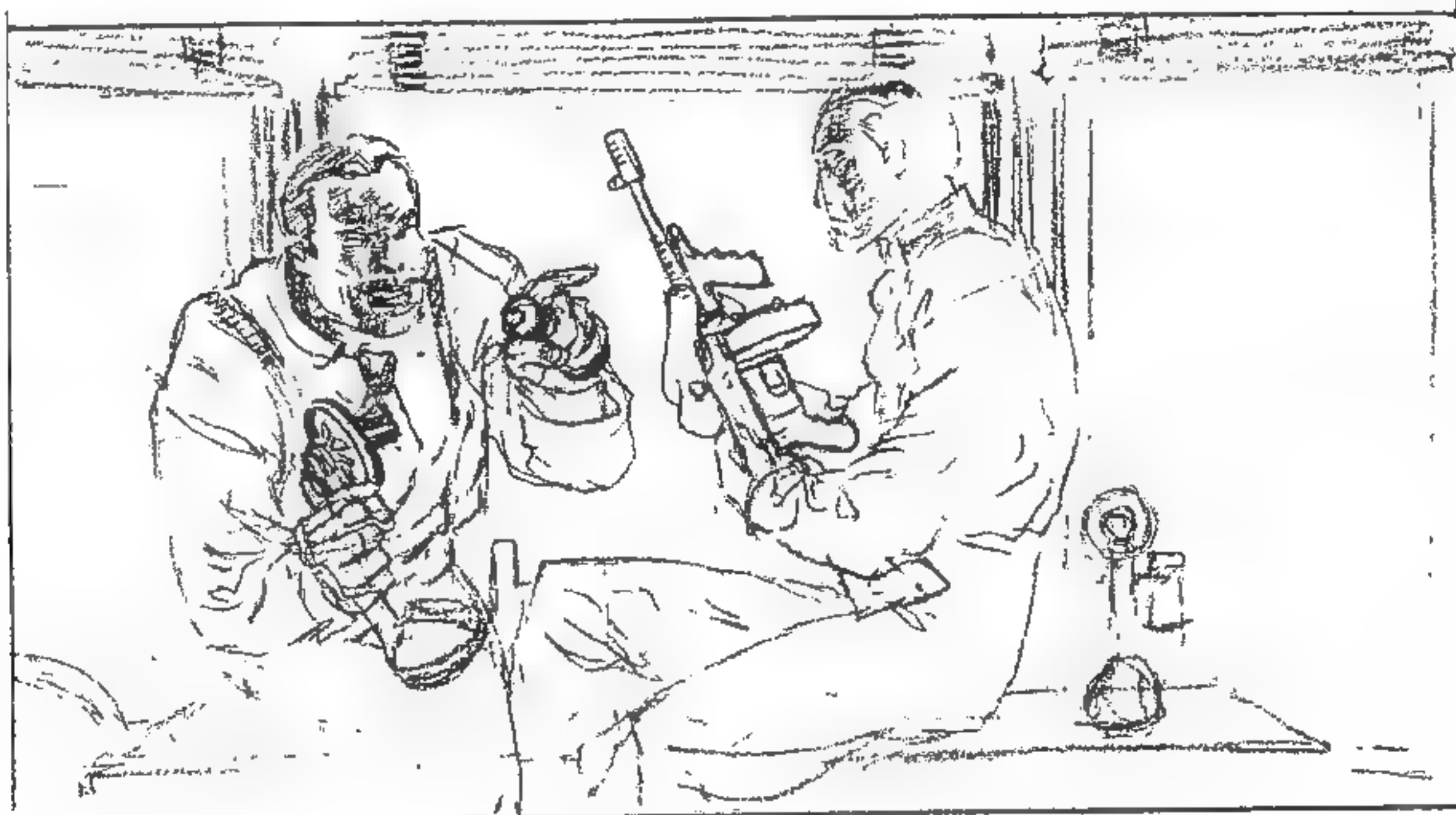
Because I kind of live in the artwork as I’m doing it, each project has a special feeling. When I look back I see the fun I had doing all the pictures. It’ll take somebody else to judge what my best work is. Sitting here looking at the walls in my studio, I see the original for one of the Christopher Enterprises’ prints, “Why He Doesn’t Sleep At Night.” It’s monumental. It’s drawn on one full piece of 23” by 29” Strathmore paper. It’s got lines and color all over it; it’s a riot of color. It’s a riot of design, too, and the figures “work.” It’s a perfect piece of “Michael Kaluta” work. I was very very happy with it when I did it and even happier now. It’s about twenty-five years old. It’s still a fresh thing that I feel was done yesterday. On the opposite wall, from the same time period, is a piece called “The Sacrifice” or “Conan in Chains.” I’m glad I did these two pictures. I’d like to think I’ve done something as good since then. [laughs] More recently I did a cover for an audio CD compilation, a tribute to Black Sabbath called *Nativity in Black*. Again, it was a full piece of Strathmore paper: an angel holding a tattooed baby with cosmic lettering floating around them. I look at the original and it sparkles. I get dangerously impressed with myself. Then there is the cover I just finished for the next *Books of Magic* trade paperback. It’s got hearts and butterflies, twelve mermaids, a big merman, and little Tim Hunter, all submerged and flowing into each other. I enjoyed doing it as much as any cover or comic page in the past.

Is there any one thing out there that you haven’t done that you’d like to?

I’d like to be called up monthly to do design work for movies. Not the storyboards, but the design work. Coming up with ideas. I like doing that and I’m good at it. The times I have done it, it has been a lot of fun and very successful, even if never produced. I love seeing something go from a scribble on the page, through many many hands and come out fully

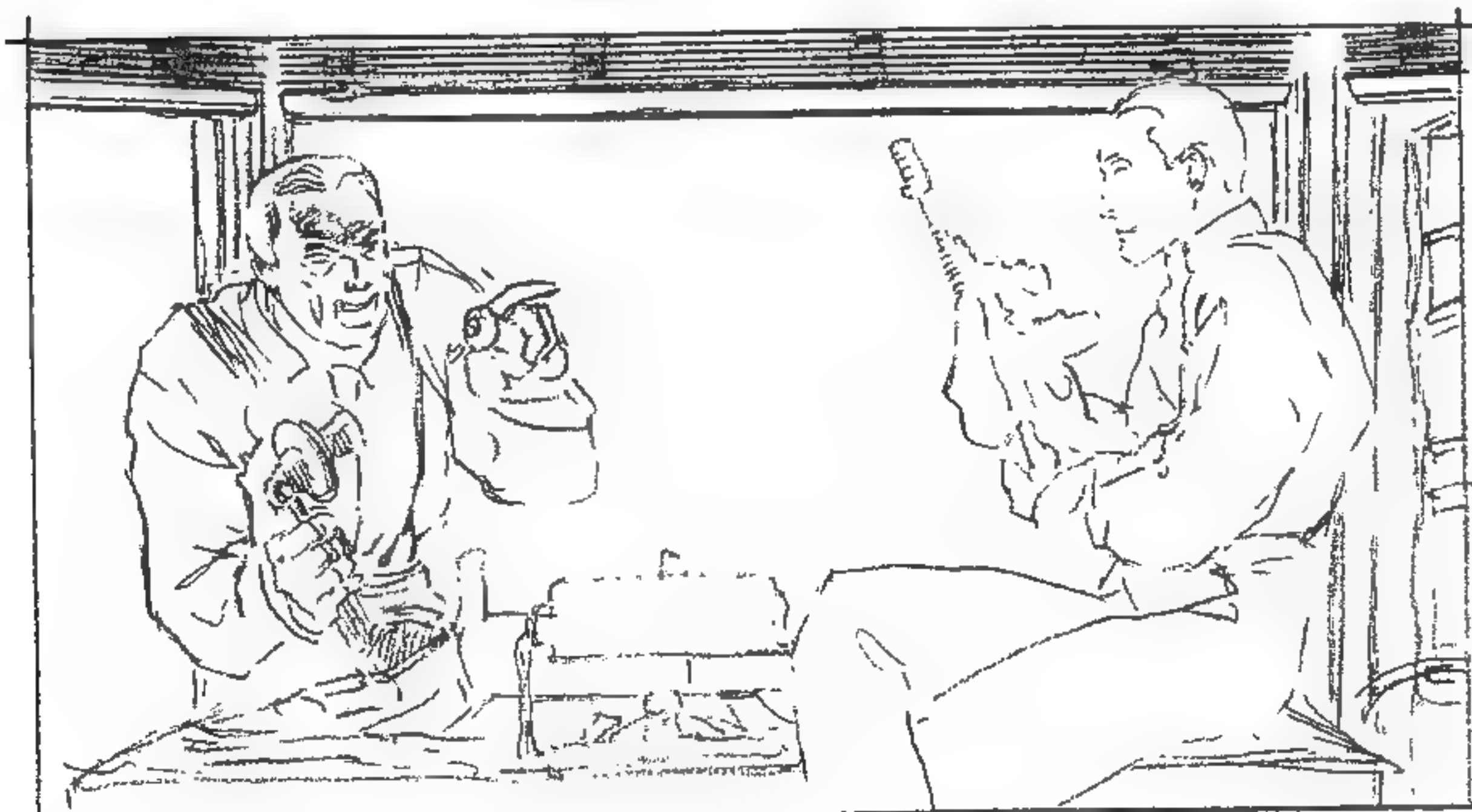
PROFILES

realized in a movie. It's great to see a film or TV show, see my design and say, "I did that." [laughs] Besides looking at *The Human Target*, the two places a person can see my work or the influence of my work is in the film *Buckaroo Banzai* . . . I drew the cover of the Comic Book the hunters find in the mud near the alien pod, and *The Shadow*, where my DC Comic work influenced the overall look and feel of the movie. ❖



DEAR DANNY + PAUL - HERE'S SOME SKETCHES! THIS LAYOUT ABOVE WILL BE STRETCHED IN THE NEXT FAX, SO THERE'LL BE ROOM FOR THE PRIMITIVES. FINALLY, A NEW SKETCH VERSION OF THE 'DEMON SWALLOWING' - CALL BACK - I'M HERE UNTIL 4PM TOMORROW - (1 PM YOUR TIME TUESDAY)

MK.



THE STRETCHED VERSION —

Drawings done for *G-Men* an unproduced movie for Hollywood Pictures.

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Preliminary drawing for the cover to *The Books of Magic* # 44. Actual cover appears on the next page.
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HOW MICHAEL KALUTA CREATES COMICS

You are currently doing the covers for the Books of Magic. When you have a cover assignment what's your thought process? How do you go about creating it?

There are two or three different approaches to the cover assignments. The main and preferable way: I get a call from the editor or the editor's assistant. They say they're going to fax over the writer's synopsis of the story, and see what I can come up with. I get the synopsis via fax and I take it off to a coffee shop. I sit and I read it carefully. I start doodling little ideas. I get very excited by one or two of them. I bring them back to the studio and draw them up at about 8 1/2" x 11". I fax the page off to the editor with some notes. Then a phone call follows, especially if my drawing

isn't very readable. I then get an approval, with or without changes. I take the sketch, blow it up on a Xerox machine to about 10"x 15", use a light box to transfer it onto a piece of art paper, work it up in pencil, ink it, color it, and take it in.

Sometimes, if the writer doesn't know what they want for that issue (I might be working far ahead, or the writer is far behind) I'll call the writer and discuss his thought processes. Often we simply agree on what would look cool on the cover. More often than not, with first John Rieber and now Peter Gross, I'd hear, "What would you like to draw?" I would think for a moment, come up with some image and hear, "We can work that in somehow." Some of my favorite covers have come

about that way. Every once in a while, the editors and writers have a definite need for particular imagery on the cover. That's a parameter that serves to excite the thought processes more. I like working in that box. When I'm told, "... do anything you want," I can be at a loss. I don't always know what I want. But when they say, "Do what you want inside this parameter," then I know how far afield I can go before I hit a wall. That focuses my concentration more.

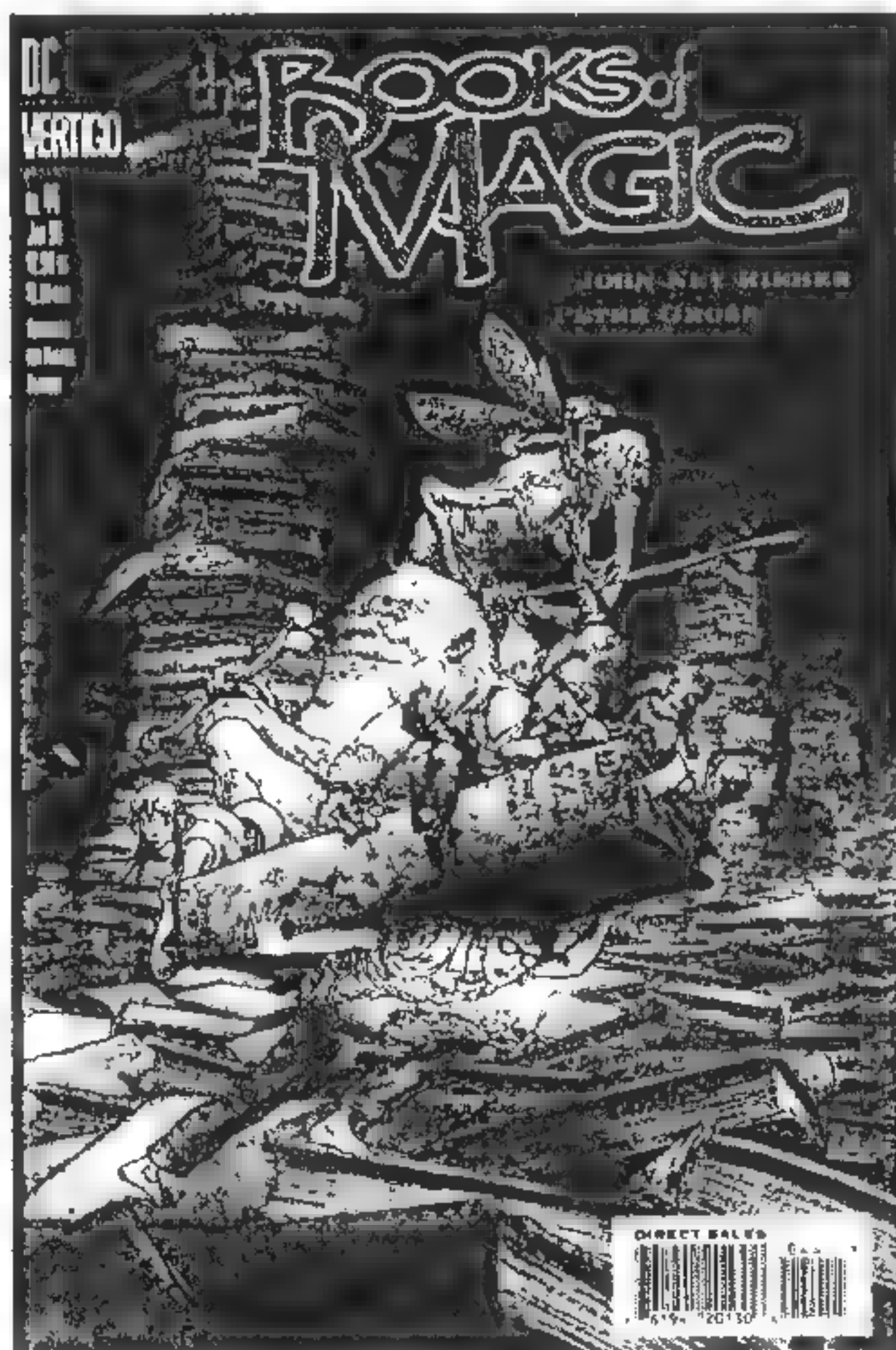
From start to finish, from when you first get that script

to the time you finish a cover, how long is that process?

Well, if I have the jump on it, it can take four days. Other times I may not be able to get right to the sketch, or I get the sketch, get it approved and then have to finish painting a previous cover; or I choke. I generally try to turn it around in a week or a week and a half.

What type of paper do you use for your covers?

The past several covers I've been using paper that I picked up at the DC Comics offices, their cover stock. I draw on the back of it so there are no blue lines around the artwork. But I normally use Strathmore 3-ply Kid Finish paper.



When you are doing a story, do you thumbnail it first?

Generally speaking, yes. It is a very good idea — it certainly helps with the pacing. In drawing comic books, where what happens from panel to panel or page to page is so important, I can't see how one would draw the story without doing thumbnail layouts — unless, like Bernie Wrightson, you lay the story out directly on the full-sized paper. Whenever I've been away from comics for a while, I have to go back to thumbnailing everything out and then working from that. When I'm hot, in the middle of a job, I don't have to lay it out in any great detail. I do very quick suggestions to myself, then get right down into the meat of the

story. If it's only a six or eight page story then the process is very quick. With *Starstruck*, hundreds of pages long, I had to map out what went on from page to page very definitely. There was a lot of dialogue, there was a lot of captioning and I needed to thumbnail who was talking to whom, where, for the story to flow and the images to be fun to look at.

I would assume that when it comes down to drawing, since you're going to ink it, the pencils would be very loose?

How Michael Kaluta Creates Comics

In some places yes, if the hand is hot. When I'm doing three covers in a three week period, by the time I'm working on the third one the little sketch I faxed over to the editor is all the layout I need. Rather than taking it through the stages leading up to the light box transfer, I just blow the sketch up, transfer and ink. When one gets a really good image it's best to do as much pre-work as possible, tightening the art as much as one can stand. I start to get tired, and find myself wanting to jump into the inking before the drawing is ready. I know I have that foible so I try to



keep myself excited and working at the drawing. Sometimes I just jump in before all the pre-work is finished, trusting my hand. That means every once in a while there's a mistake.

When you're working on something and you know you'll be collaborating, you're doing the pencils and someone else will be doing the inking, how much do you play to who your inker is?

I draw a lot more if I have an inker than if I was going to ink the art myself. I've only had two people do inking over my drawing — on big jobs, anyway — and that's Bernie and Charles Vess. I thought a lot about what they'd need to see to get the job done. It takes a lot longer to draw for another inker, at least the way I draw. With the Marvel Shadow story, I even used the kind of paper Bernie liked to work on. It was difficult for me to pencil on and I would never have worked on that paper for inking. But Bernie

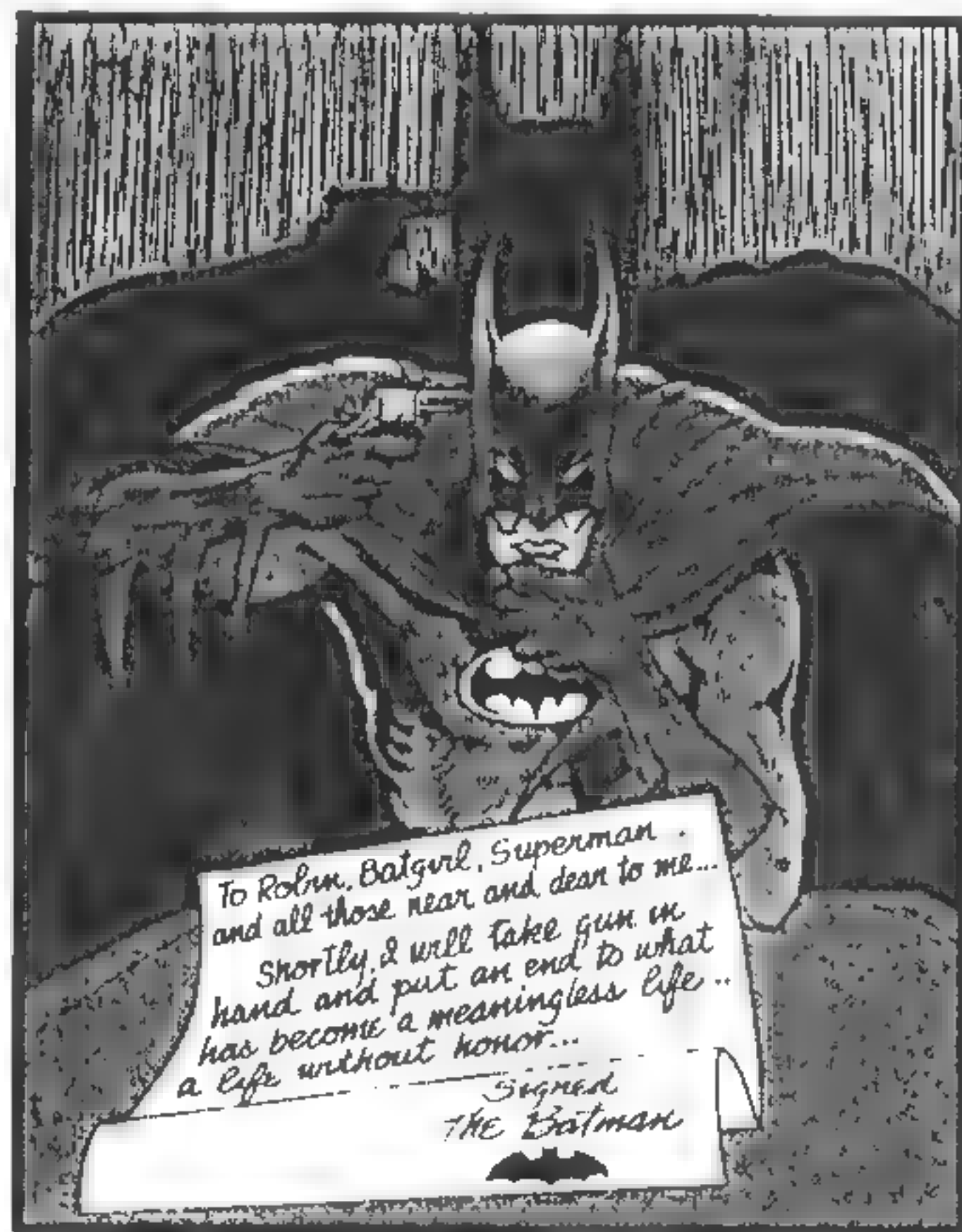
loved the stuff.

What kind of paper was it?

Some kind of illustration board. I've forgotten what kind. Bainbridge board or something like that. It was Hot Press Board, meaning it had a very slick surface, the kind that's perfect for a brush; Bernie's chosen instrument. Hot Press doesn't have a hard enough surface for pen. The pen pulls up little bits of paper, the ink bleeds — it is horrifying!

Why did you switch from using a brush?

What brushwork technique I had back in the "old" days, I lost as I worked on *Starstruck*, using pen and ink for all those years. I do pen and ink work now, exclusively. It's much more comfortable; I can feel the paper. I can watch the line going right down on the paper where I want it. The technique I use today is more of an outline technique. If I can put a line around the figure it pops off the page. With all the covers I have been painting, the linework has become



Preliminary sketch (left) and final cover for *Detective Comics* #426. Batman © & TM 1999 DC Comics. All rights reserved.

more and more outline oriented, lacking rendering. Once again, my study of Alphonse Mucha and Aubrey Beardsley focused my eye onto this technique. The color does the job of rounding out the images. But recently, I have felt the need to do more pen rendering and over the past five or six covers, I've started adding more inner lines to help with the volume of the drawn object. ♦

MICHAEL KALUTA AND THE SHADOW

MICHAEL KALUTA

One of the things, as far as comic books go, that you're best known for is your work on The Shadow. You have revisited The Shadow several times. The first time was in 1973 with Denny O'Neil. I've read where they had been searching for an artist.

Yes, they had gone through Jim Steranko, Alex Toth, Bernie Wrightson and, their most-hoped-for, Jim Aparo. All had other commitments or were somehow not suitable to some part of the scheme.

Were you surprised to get that assignment?

I was floored. I was in the coffee room at DC Comics, where there were several vending machines and some tables. The young guys that wanted to be in comics would hang out there, visiting and showing off new stuff, rather than hang out in the little lobby by the elevators. (We hung out in the lobby whenever there was a really attractive receptionist. Of course we'd get shooed out of there because the company wanted her to get some work done.) Being in the coffee room every day, you ended up hearing all about what was going on in comics. I was hanging out with Steve Harper one day in early '73. Denny O'Neil was hanging out with Steve Skeates. I suppose I said, "What's happening?" My way of rhetorically saying "hello" or "good morning." Denny said he was looking for an artist for *The Shadow*. We discussed some candidates for a few minutes. I went back to my table. Steve Harper said, "You should ask him for it." I said, "What, are you nuts?" But Steve egged me on and I finally said, if I recall correctly, "Um, Could I do it?" Denny said, "... hold on a second." He walked away for a few minutes, came back and said, "You got the job." I don't even know why or how that happened. Twenty, maybe twenty-two pages per issue — I

hadn't done that much work in my life. I think that at times since Denny has had cause to regret that day. I was not a very good professional. I wasn't professional at all, as a matter of fact. I hadn't learned yet that all the editor really wants to know is the truth. He doesn't want to hear what you think he wants to hear. By suggesting to Denny I'd done more work than I had, he'd tell his boss when the book was going to be coming in. Of course the work wasn't done, so Denny didn't have the book on time. It was one of those domino effects. If I had said, "Look, I haven't even started yet," it wouldn't have been the end of the world. Denny would have said, "Okay, we'll just push the deadline back some. Get to work." It was a rocky learning experience in which Denny

got the raw end of the deal. After working on *The Shadow* and torturing Denny with my tardiness on deadlines, I always told editors the truth as to how far along the work was. In these later days, Denny has said some really nice things about the product of our working relationship. Maybe the various things I ruined for him by not getting the work in on time (like his 1973 summer vacation) have gone by the boards. In the end, the teamwork produced some really good comic books.

In the mid 80's the two of you worked on a Shadow story for Marvel.

Yes. That was a whole different set-up. It was supposed to be me drawing it and Bernie Wrightson inking it and Denny

writing it. We each got a third of the royalty. We also got paid our page rate. When the script came in, it was not what I had expected. I had come up with an idea that Denny had liked, and he had certainly incorporated that idea in the script but it didn't seem to break any new ground. I thought the graphic novel was going to go places the Shadow hadn't gone before. At that point what I didn't do and what I should have done was call up Denny and say, "Hey, can we work on this?" But I was concerned if I said something negative, they would take the job away



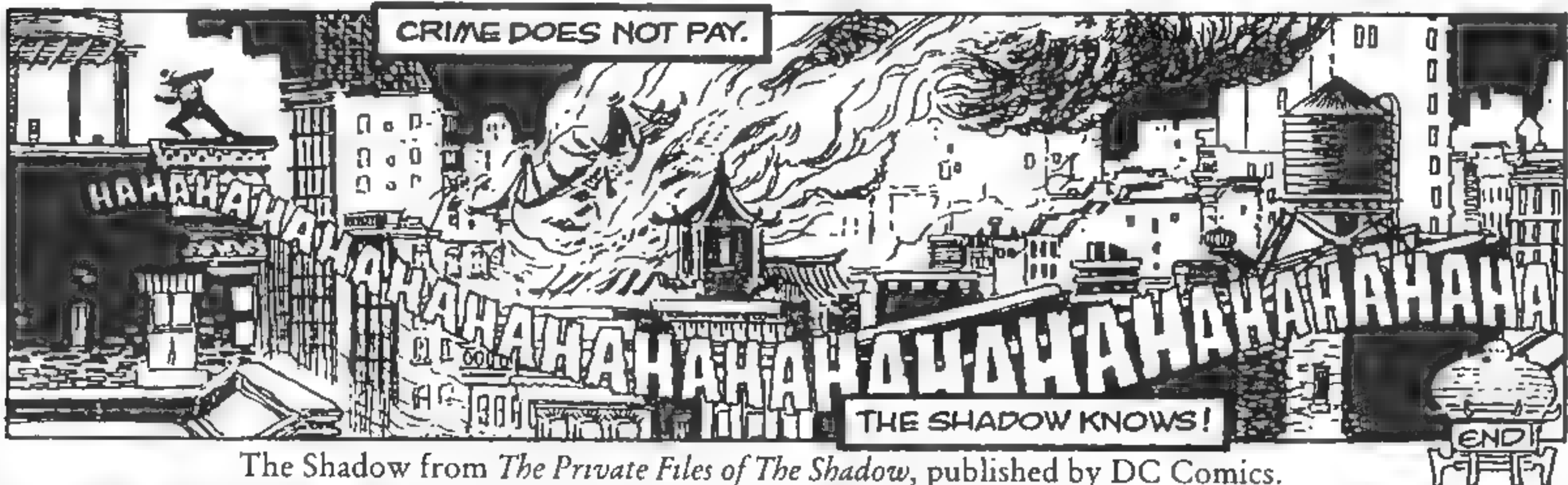
Convention Sketch

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THE WEED OF CRIME BEARS BITTER FRUIT!



CRIME DOES NOT PAY.



THE SHADOW KNOWS!

END!

The Shadow from *The Private Files of The Shadow*, published by DC Comics.
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PROFILES

from me. I had a real tough time interfacing with what I perceived to be authority. What I did is I re-wrote the story. Denny didn't know I had changed it as much as I had until the book came out. Although I loved the new script, not conferring with Denny was a bad thing to do. But I couldn't help myself. It's the one thing I'd change if I had to do it over. I spent at least a year on the writing and the penciling, and in the end Bernie never inked it.

Right. Didn't Russ Heath do the inking?

Yeah. I was in California at the time Bernie backed out. The editor, Larry Hama, suggested Russ Heath as inker. I suggested a couple of other people and Larry said no, Russ was just perfect for it. Russ was indeed excellent. But he wasn't Bernie Wrightson. I had it in my mind that Bernie would be inking it, and I had drawn every page with Bernie in mind. If I had known that Russ was going to ink it, I would not have bothered to draw the cars and guns in such detail. Russ knows these mechanical things backwards and forwards. Because Bernie was supposed to ink it, I drew the machines as accurately as I could, knowing if I didn't, Bernie would put a toy gun or car into the panel — machines mean nothing to Bernie! Bernie is a master of the figure, the clothing, the mood and the lighting. What Bernie can do with a fold is like what Russ can do with a Mauser — bring it to life. So, I ignored the folds and lighting and mood (to a point) in favor of amping up the places Bernie would appreciate the help. Whenever I would draw the

Shadow in his cloak, I wouldn't sweat over all the folds because Bernie would make the folds come alive when he passed his

brush over them. It turned out to be a much more "civilian" looking job. Russ followed everything I'd done exactly. He added in a lot of terrific cross-hatching and he didn't take the low road at all.

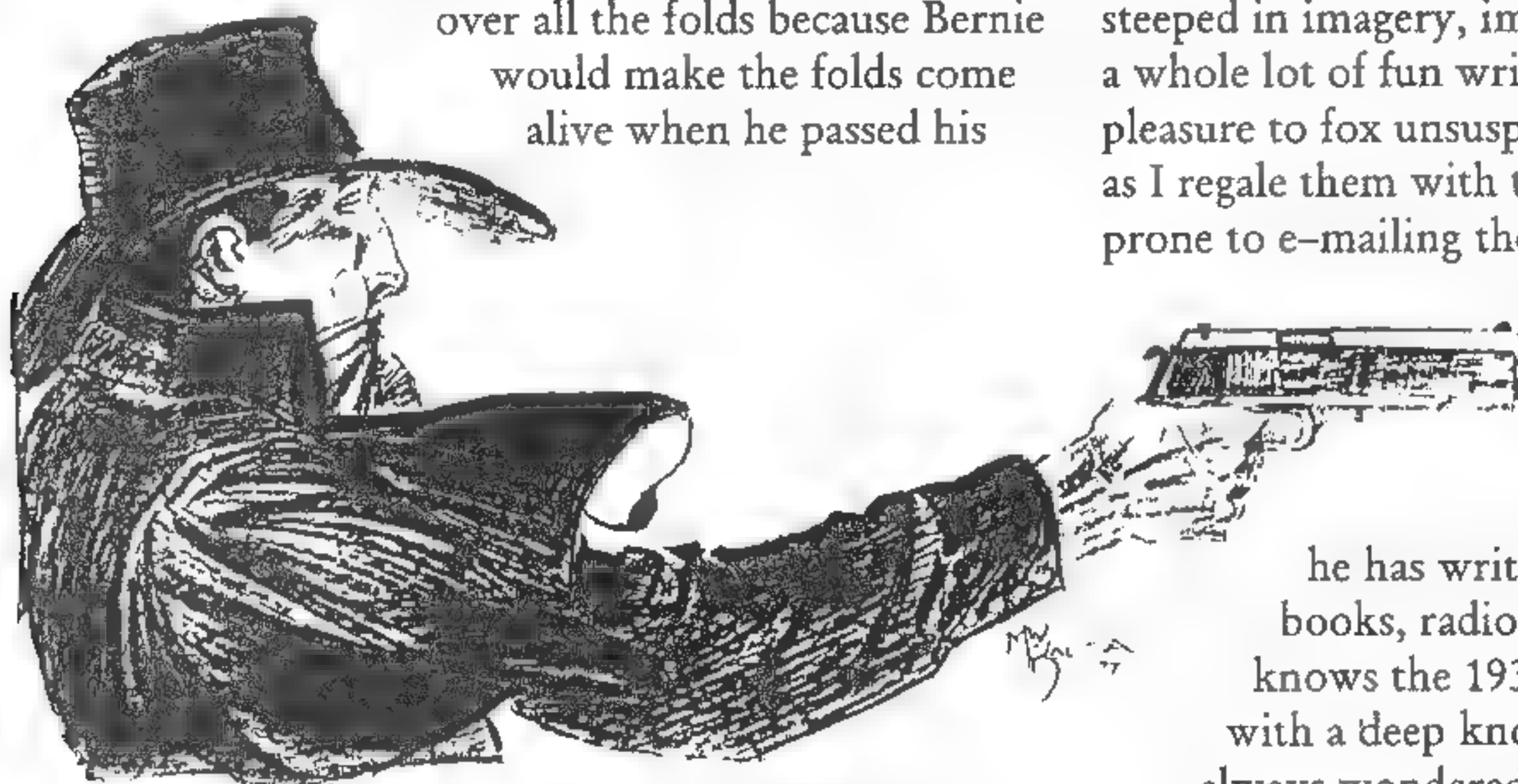
In the end, there were only a few weeks of time available to color the job. Marvel had three or four wonderful guys do the full color but they only had two and a half weeks in which to do it. To get the job done, many many other artists were called in and they had a marathon session doing the blues. The majority of the final color didn't accentuate the fine line work that Russ and I did, but that's just the way of the world. I like the story a lot but there's too much, "Golly if only this had happened or that had happened." As far as the final product goes, it's not my most favorite. But as far as the story goes, I'm totally satisfied.

What is your favorite Shadow story? One of the ones you did for Dark Horse?

Yeah. The Shadow stories written with Joel Goss, definitely.

Did you enjoy writing those stories?

Yes, I did two different kinds of writing on The Shadow projects for Dark Horse. The writing that was pure fun was "My City," the four issues of text included in *In the Coils of Leviathan*, which were there to set a "pulpy" feeling for the Shadow books. As I've said, I probably killed three thesauri writing these prose pieces. They are as purple as all get out; steeped in imagery, imagery on top of imagery. I had a whole lot of fun writing them. It is my guilty pleasure to fox unsuspecting visitors into sitting still as I regale them with the full four chapters. I am also prone to e-mailing them, one at a time, to just about anybody . . . Surprise! [laughs]



Sketch from 1977 *The Shadow* © & TM 1999 Conde Nast Publications, Inc. All rights reserved.

Writing in conjunction with Joel Goss was quite a different experience. Joel is a real writer; he has written film scripts, he has written books, radio material and stage shows. He knows the 1930's and 1940's very well, along with a deep knowledge of New York City. I'd always wondered how two writers wrote one script. As it turned out, we actually hovered over

MICHAEL KALUTA

the same keyboard, shifting our chairs when each of us wanted to type something in. Once the story plot had gelled, Joel would take it and hammer out the whole script. He would then give it to me, I would do a pass and then he would finish it up. That's how we did the four-issue series *In the Coils of Leviathan*. The next Shadow story, *Hell's Heat Wave*, a series in three books, was much more Joel alone at the typewriter with me tossing an idea in every now and then. We would have our meetings and talk and then Joel would set to it and finish up the script.

When, years before, I'd worked with Elaine on *Starstruck*, I was an advisor; we would come up with some ideas together but the writing of it was Elaine's. I would add a sentence or phrase when asked. With Joel, I actually worked on the script itself. I was tasked to type in sentences, descriptions, dialogue and descriptive passages. After the *Hell's Heat Wave* project, Joel and I were tagged to do the adaptation of the Shadow movie. We both had read the screenplay. We both thought it could use some help; a lot of help. It was unfortunate the producers hadn't hired someone to write their screenplay who knew or cared about The Shadow. In doing the adaptation, we could not go very far from the film script story. But we knew that within the movie story we could make a real Shadow story. We literally scanned the script into a word processor and then threw out chunks of it. The prologue: Gone. The mind-reading: Gone. The wimpy Margo: Gone. The wimpy Shadow: Gone! [laughs] Then we tweaked it so The Shadow got to do something in the forty-four pages of space we had for the two-issue comic book. We were very happy with the way our finished script

turned out. We told the same story, but made it a fine Shadow tale.

I love re-reading The Shadow stories I did with Joel. I like it that we were able to use The Shadow as The Shadow, where he is not a superhero, not a lunatic, but a cunning being that knows what he is doing. Satisfying.

In these Shadow stories you have co-written, do you ever feel that you should have gone on and done the artwork, also?

No, not at all. We had Gary Gianni, a great talent, drawing those Shadow stories; he put so much work into them, more than I may have ever done. Having helped write the story, drawing it would have felt redundant. Normally I work up a story from thumbnails to my finished pages based on someone else's script. I get to second guess the writer, using their words and descriptions to further my ideas of how the story will look. When I write a story, the

visuals come up during that process, so I feel bound to them when it comes to the art — does that make sense? I did do layouts to go along with our scripts, especially for *In the Coils of Leviathan* and the short stories in *The Shadow and the Mysterious Three* [art by Stan Manoukian and Vince Roucher]. I did fairly detailed little layouts. Gary followed them to a point but he added a lot more of his own details and angles in there. For the *Hell's Heat Wave* series I did much less detailed layouts: just stick figures to show pacing.

May I add here: the Dark Horse Shadow books would never have looked so good had we not had the talents of ace colorist James Sinclair. What a guy! ♦



The Shadow and Margo *The Shadow* © & TM 1999
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RONN SUTTON

*Do you recall the day Michael received the news that he would be working on *The Shadow*?*

I remember *very* clearly the day Michael got *The Shadow*.

I was living in upstate New York just down the street from Bernie Wrightson, with *Aquaman* writer Steve Skeates as my roommate. We'd regularly come into the city and go to DC or Continuity Studios or just hang out. I guess it was in 1973 that Skeates, myself and Michael were hanging out in DC's coffee room. Steve and I were mostly yakking while Michael was sketching in his book and drinking a bottomless cup of coffee. The DC coffee room at that time was a place where DC employees could take a break, where informal meetings took place, and where freelancers

hung around & met one another. At some point I was walking around the halls talking to Denny O'Neil who was trying to figure out who he was going to get to draw the upcoming *Shadow* series after Steranko, Wrightson and Toth had left the project for one reason or another. I suggested Kaluta citing his interest in everything Art Deco and 1930's & 40's. He said "Yeah, that's what everyone else has been saying too." Denny said thanks and went off and I went back to the coffee room to join Steve and Michael, who was still drawing. Eventually Denny came back and asked Michael to come with him back to his office. About twenty minutes later Michael strolled back, sat down, smile beaming and said "I just got *The Shadow* [assignment.]" And the rest, as they say, is history . . .

JOEL GOSS

When was the first time you worked with Michael?

Well, he and Elaine [Lee] and I worked together on story ideas for *The Flash* TV series. Danny Bilson and Paul DeMeo had told us they were interested in story ideas from us and, if *The Flash* was picked up for additional episodes, they would buy them from us. So the three of us sat around and concocted a few story ideas. We had a great deal of fun even though the show didn't get picked up and our ideas were never used. Michael and I had been looking for something to do together officially when Dark Horse got the rights to *The Shadow* and Michael said he wanted to work with me on that.

*What was it like collaborating with Michael on the *Shadow* projects?*

It was fun. To me it was like having Martin Scorsese ask you to work on a "wiseguy" picture. Here was a guy who was renowned for working on *The Shadow* and he was asking me to work with him on it. When the opportunity came up, I sat down and wrote a bunch of things like "a ring with a curse on it," and "mad scientist;" things that sounded like whole stories. I was trying to come up with things that sounded old-fashioned and pulp-like. So I had this list and Michael had a bunch of ideas from working on *The Shadow* through the years. So, we sat down and saw what could be put together into a story; "a

ring with a curse on it" turned into part of the first *Shadow* story we did.

*How many different *Shadow* projects did you work on together?*

The first one was *In the Coils of Leviathan* and that's four issues. Then the second one was *The Shadow and the Mysterious Three*. It's three stories that were ideas that were put down for potential longer stories, but we made them into three short stories. Then there was the movie adaptation. Neither one of us liked the movie script, so we changed it as much as we could. We changed the ending, because there were a lot of things in the movie that had been done before. Michael and I both felt that it was fine to have a premise that you'd seen before, but the resolution has got to be different. Then we did a three-part story, *The Shadow: Hell's Heat Wave*. Michael let me tinker with the form for this one. The first issue seems to be a complete story, but when you turn to the final page you have *The Shadow* summing up the story and there's things that don't make sense. Just like they wouldn't in a normal story where people might complain. So, that leads to the second issue. I just think it was great that Michael let me try something like that. He not only let me try it but we wrote it together, and had fun doing it.



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STUDIO TALK

MICHAEL KALUTA

In the middle seventies The Studio was formed and you were the last person [after Bernie Wrightson, Barry Windsor-Smith, and Jeff Jones] to come into it, and sort of reluctantly so?

Reluctantly so. I didn't work very much at the time . . . not a whole lot of money came in. Even though the Studio rent was only an extra hundred dollars, I had just rented another room next door to my apartment. I didn't want to leave that room and having that room, I didn't really need a studio. All the other guys wanted to get out of their houses, some had families, some just had little apartments. At the time, it didn't seem viable for me. Then, however, I was visiting Richmond, Virginia and Charlie Vess had just graduated from college. I asked him, "What are you going to do with yourself now that you're out of school?" He said, "My parents want me to come home." I said, "Do you want to?" He said, "No." So I said, "Well, ever think of moving to New York?" He said, "I'll do it." He paid the hundred bucks for the one room he'd be in, and I used that hundred bucks to pay for my part of the Studio, so there I was.

Ultimately The Studio came to an end. Why?

We were sub-leasing the Studio space from a printing

company on the fourth or sixth floor of the same building; we were on the twelfth. Our Studio was a space they weren't using. They'd just downsized a little bit so they rented it out at four hundred bucks a month. We each paid a hundred for quite a grand place. After about three years, the printing company wanted to expand back up into it but they weren't sure when. So, rather than renew the lease for several more years (which is, of course, what we wanted) they said they would renew the lease on a month-to-month basis. We looked at each other and realized none of us could move out of there at a month's notice. We all had so much stuff. I'm sure there was some discussion about finding a new space but we'd lost our Muse. Everybody decided to move back into their homes. I really hadn't been inside my apartment in months. I pretty much lived at the Studio. So, I measured all the books on my Studio shelves to see how many feet of books I had, made shelving in my apartment to those specs and moved all the books home. Living and working in a 9 x 14 foot room was quite different after all that Studio space. After we left the Studio, the printers brought up giant metal shelving. The Studio went from a wonderland of art and feathers to a room full of metal printing plates racked on shelves.

JEFF JONES

How did you first meet Michael?

If memory serves, I met Michael and Bernie Wrightson at a New York City convention in the fall of 1968. Michael may dispute this because he is the "memory giant." But I remember this as being so. We were there to show our fledgling work. I had arrived in New York about a year earlier and had a couple of jobs done. My memory is sketchy as to details but Bernie had a bunch of \$5 and \$10 ballpoint pen drawings piled on a table in the art show for sale. Michael was more of the portfolio type. I mention Bernie in the Michael question because he was the one who introduced us.

What do you feel is his strength as an artist?

Michael's greatest strength as an artist has always been his ability to remind us to stay alive. His art is moral

in the sense that it, as the best art, has absolutely no function except to exist. It has the promise of function and will remain where that beauty lives. I speak of the human spirit and it's passion to rise above everything, except that which we all already know. Michael reminds us of that connection between all lives and all that makes us human. This takes a true artist.

You and Michael worked on projects together, both formally and informally. Does any one project stand out as particularly memorable?

The thing that jumps to mind is a period of time during The Studio days, if you will, when we were trying to decide what to call our upcoming book (*The Studio*). Michael taped long rolls of brown kraft paper

JEFF JONES

to one wall where each of us, usually clandestinely, would write our suggestions. Well, this certainly started out seriously but quickly degenerated into a list of some of the most preposterous titles imagined by the minds of the deranged. I believe that even though most of these would appear in the dark of night, it was pretty easy to tell who wrote what. We laughed for what seemed months. Definitely a great achievement in the art of cooperation. ♦

BARRY WINDSOR-SMITH

How did you first meet Michael?

I met Michael at a convention in Canada in the very early 1970's. He and I had somehow agreed to be "auctioned off," and I, most certainly, had not the first idea what this meant exactly. I wasn't sure if I'd ever see New York City again. I cannot recall the outcome of the auction at all, perhaps Michael does. I have an old black and white photo of he and myself standing awkwardly on stage as the bidding went higher and higher. We had only just met each other in a hallway when we were accosted by an over-eager fan who wanted to know if we were "Jim Barry and Mike Kalootchie." Wishing only to confuse the fan further I nodded and said, "Yes, I'm Mike Kalootchie, what of it?" This was a problem for Michael because the fan was really big on Jim Barry, and he proceeded to sling hundreds of questions at Michael about how he draws Conan. Michael ably answered every inquiry put to him with wit and grace and each time he started to laugh at this absurdity he managed to control the grin into a pleasant, affable smile.

What do you feel is Michael's strongest point as an artist?

Kaluta's strongest point as an artist, you say? I think his art is very much his personality and vice-versa. The word that springs to mind is "charm," no, sorry, I mean "charm." Michael is full of witty

thoughts and is most happy when he has a personal audience to indulge in conversation; his art is his graphic variation of this propensity. I feel quite certain that when Michael is drawing he is actually partaking in fantasized conversations with people he knows, and quite likely, the characters he is drawing too. Michael's term for such conversational, anecdotal ideas — whether verbal or graphic — is "Wigbubbles." The

designation in itself is charming. Kaluta's apartment is legendary for its colorful abundance of hundreds, nay — thousands, of knickknacks: toys, charms, beads,

books, feathers, skulls, lamps, records, statues, brake pads,

magazines, prints, affidavits, dolls,

boxes, urns, frilly

panties, ashtrays,

puzzles, photos,

crystals, nail

clippings, nosegays,

watercolors, push

pins, tape cassettes,

postcards, toy cars,

toy trucks, toys

generally, musical

instruments, license

plates, socks, colored

stones from a beach he

never went to, French

letters, moon rocks, match

books, am I being too specific?

Oh, okay, well . . . all right, you get the drift, right? Anyway, I've

always thought that his apartment

with, well you know lots of stuff in it,

was a deliberate and knowing physical manifestation of his mind, wherein, to follow the analogy, each object was in fact a wigbubble.



BERNIE WRIGHTSON

You met Michael at a convention in 1967 and then began rooming together?

Yeah, we shared an apartment I think through part of 1968 and 1969.

Why did you guys hit it off?

I guess because we were interested in the same things. I saw Michael's work and I just really responded to it; it was great stuff. He was doing a strip called "Eyes of Mars" for the *Graphic Showcase* fanzine. It was his tip of the hat to the John Carter story. It was just beautiful work. At the time it was a little rough, it wasn't the Michael Kaluta that we all know and love now. But the seeds of that were there.

You immortalized him, in a sense, by using him for the villain in the Swamp Thing story that appeared in House of Secrets #92. Why did you pick Michael?

Obviously there were others there, Jeff Jones...

When Jeff had a comic strip to do, or a comic book job, he would photograph everything for reference. He would call all his friends over and we'd spend the whole evening photographing. It would be like a big party. We'd hold props and things and strike different poses all in his living room. When the Swamp Thing job came along, Jeff already had his cameras set up from some other job he was doing, with tripods and lights and everything. I just had everybody get together down in Jeff's apartment and we just photographed the hell out of this. They needed this thing in a really short time. I think the story goes that I did it in a weekend, but it probably took a little longer than that. I remember the deadline was really tight and I just thought that it would go faster if we took photos and worked from reference. Michael posed for the bad guy because he had this great mustache at the time, this really full mustache that he could curl the ends up a bit. So he wet his hair and parted it in the

middle, and he looked like a snake oil salesman, and I thought it was perfect typecasting.

What's the story behind the "Ka-Loota" story that appeared in Green Lantern #84? Why was Michael's name used as the gadget?

Well, as far as I can remember, Michael really hadn't started working at DC yet. Maybe he was doing his first job or two for but he wasn't really well known there yet. I had been hanging around the office for about a year by then and I had gotten to know Neal [Adams]. I was always talking about Michael but I would never say Michael, I would always say "Kaluta." And every time I said "Kaluta," Neal would giggle because he thought it was a funny sounding name. And he would sit there and work and make up little "Kaluta" songs while he was working, kind of



Neal Adams pencils and Wrightson inks on *Green Lantern* #84.
Green Lantern © & TM 1999 DC Comics. All rights reserved.

singing to himself. So he's doing the Green Lantern story and they needed a funny sound effect and a name for this little thing that sprays gas in people's faces and controls them, and they decided to call it a "Kaluta." That's basically the story. I only inked that job because Dick Giordano came down with the flu at the time and I didn't even know that "Kaluta" was in it until I got the job to ink it.

How did you first meet Michael?

It was around 1971. I was attending Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond, Virginia working on my art degree. Michael had attended the school a few years earlier, before he headed off to NYC and still had friends there, notably Phil Trumbo. One time when he was down visiting Phil, who knew that I loved comics, invited me over to meet Michael. We just got to be good friends from there. Soon after, I remember sitting in the center of on-campus student activity, enjoying the warm weather, girl-watching, and I kept seeing a face in the crowd I thought I recognized. I walked over to say hello. It was Michael, down for another visit. He had pages with him from "Death is Bliss," the fourth issue of *The Shadow*. I remember sitting there and looking at those gorgeous inky black original pages with him making comments on his own art and those that had helped out on the inking chores. It was really fun. We got to be pretty good friends and when I went up to New York to visit I'd stay with him. Then in 1976 I decided I needed to move to New York. I had graduated from college and worked in an animation house for a while, but I really wanted to draw comics. That was the time that The Studio was forming. Michael was moving about half of his stuff down to that huge loft space, so now he had an empty room in his apartment and he just said, "Come on up." So I piled as much as of my life as I could into a rented station wagon and drove it up to New York.

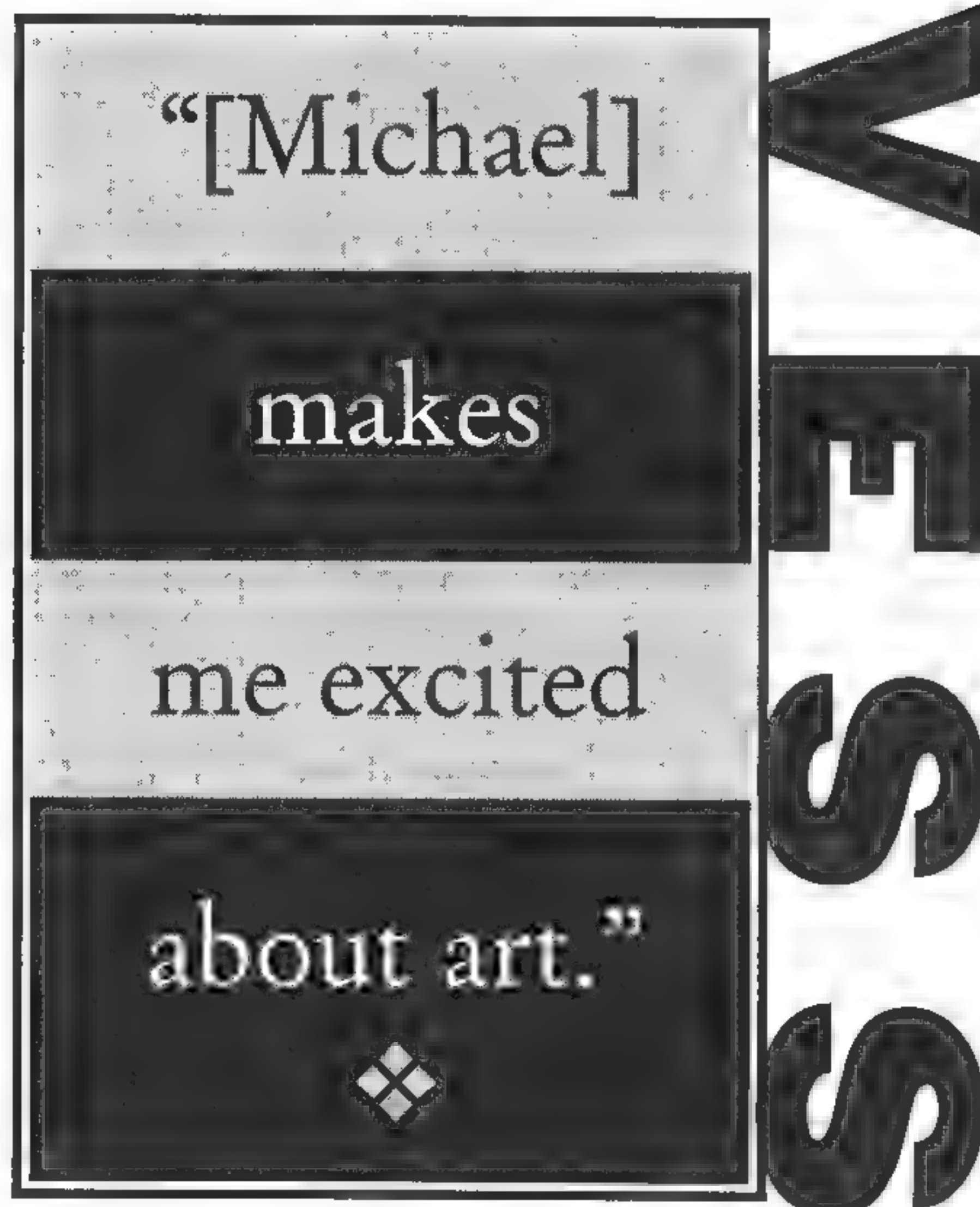
How long did you stay in New York rooming with him?

Twelve years, until I got married, moved out, and eventually came back to Virginia.

How much did the two of you help each other while you were rooming together?

There were two rooms, right next to each other and after The Studio dissolved away Michael came back to work and live in the apartment. We would walk back and forth and make comments on each other's work, which could be vastly intimidating sometimes, but interesting. It made for better pieces of art. I'd be working, slaving on something forever and Michael would walk in and look at my drawing of a very badly

charles



foreshortened arm and say, "Look at that thalidomide arm there," and I'd think to myself, "Oh God, yes of course," and start erasing. Sometimes you get so caught up into the energy of drawing a piece that you can't step back and see something that's glaringly obvious to anyone else. So it's always better if a friend slips you the info *before* it sees print and a thousand people make disparaging remarks about your bad drawing skills.

What was it like visiting The Studio?

There was a lot of amazing art going on there, but their personalities didn't really mesh very well. There was always the sense of a concentrated effort, at least at first, of the four of them trying to step lightly through the mine field of (well earned) big egos. But it was really exciting to go down there and see what they would be doing. I was absolutely broke at the time, so I would usually walk from my apartment on 92nd Street to 26th Street where the Studio was located. It was a nice long walk, good for the physique. [laughs] And then I would go on in and see what everybody was doing. All four of them were artists that I looked up to and I had been collecting

their work before I ever moved to New York. So it was a little intimidating being around them but it was also very exciting.

What was it about Michael's work that you liked?

His innate sense of place that's in every piece of Kaluta art that you will ever see. It was like you could walk into one of his panels, and you knew if you went to the left or the right and walked out of the panel, that his visual universe would just keep on going. I noticed it in his work more than in any of the other Studio artists. It's something that I still respond to to this day and I love doing it myself. Instead of thinking of the figure against a background, you're thinking of the figure within an environment and how that environment affects everything within the picture. I love his imagination. How he could take an ordinary scene and by manipulating the various pictorial elements come up with an original concept that was just absolutely amazing.

You have collaborated a few times with Michael.

There were a couple of times I colored over top of his finished pieces. There were a number of things down the years that no one will ever see. There was a storyboard for some God-awful TV commercial. We just went up to the bar, had some drinks, worked on it, took it down to the ad agency, and they gave us a bunch of money that paid the rent for a long time. We collaborated on a brochure for Singer Sewing machines, an in-house brochure. It was Santa and the elves in the sewing machine factory. [laughs] I hope no one ever shows up with those! There are about sixty-four pages of "The Galactic Girl Guides" that Michael did the pencils for and I inked. It was going to be a series for Tundra, when Tundra was in existence. Most it has never been published. Back in the Shadow days I loved seeing Michael ink with a brush, but over the years for some reason he developed a phobia against it and would only ink with a pen. When it came time to ink "The Galactic Girl Guides," I twirled out my brush and went to town and tried to drop all those shadows that I remember seeing in *The Shadow*; that kind of pulp look. Will Eisner was also a big influence on my inking on it. It was really fun to ink over Michael's pencils. However, we did have an agreement that if I didn't understand his sometimes doodly pencil lines on his renderings of the often-times whacky machines, he had to ink those.

Do you think you were successful?

I think so. I love looking at it. I pulled it out again last summer and looked at it and thought, "That's really good." It's a really fun story, I don't know why it hasn't been published.

Of the projects Michael has done, do you have a favorite?

Early on I loved "Carson of Venus." I thought that of everybody that ever did Burroughs in the comics, that Michael really 'lived' in Burroughs' world. His work on the series is really fascinating to look at. His art style develops and changes dramatically. It had that beautiful pulpy visual look that none of the other artists were doing. There's also that whole slew of beautiful art posters during The Studio days. Then there is the work he did on *Metropolis*. No one's going to do that any better than he did. He's done an amazing amount of gorgeous covers especially for DC Comics and it's really too bad that they're owned by DC and won't be collected into some massive volume because they're gorgeous.

Did Michael ever give you any advice that stuck with you?

Yes. I've written about this a couple of times. He said, "No matter how much money a publisher is willing to give you, only do a job if you feel an inner need to express that image, if it's something that really connects to you." If you're pursuing your career as an artist as opposed to someone that just wants to be able to pay the rent, then only do your work if it grabs you emotionally and you get involved in it. There's no drudgery worse than doing a piece of artwork that you have no emotional connection to, that you're only paying the rent with. And everybody else can tell when they see it.

Is there anything else you'd like to add?

Michael is a great friend and I love talking to him. I look forward to seeing each new piece of artwork that he does because he thinks a lot about everything he does. Each piece is better than the one before it, and more interesting. It might not be an anatomically perfect drawing or a composition that is balanced just so, but the idea, the concept behind the drawing is always really interesting and makes me want to run to my own drawing board and start working. I can't say anything better than that. He makes me excited about art. ♦

Of Mice and Mike

In the course of conducting our interviews a trend emerged; everyone remembered a mouse story. It seems that The Studio became overrun with mice, and the artists, Michael especially, were forced to come up with ways to cope with the problem.

CHARLES VESS

Do you have any stories from when you were rooming together?

That I could relate to the public? [laughs] There are lots of them. I remember one, but it has nothing to do with art. They had this problem with mice at The Studio. There had been so many of them that they [the mice] had begun nibbling on various expensive things that Jeff, Bernie or Michael had. Barry will come in shortly. All four of them had built up an amazing menagerie of stuff in each one of their studio spaces. It was a true wonderland of art, books, memorabilia and art de' stuff. I remember Barry pooh-poohing the mice problem for quite a long time until one day he came in and found that the cute little dears had made a small nibble *all* the way down an entire stack of Gorbimey fine art prints, thus rendering those expensively produced prints worthless. It was war after that. They had an air gun, some kind of pellet gun, and late at night, they'd get up on these tall stools in the middle of the studio, cut the lights off and wait until they started hearing the sounds of mice, flip the lights on and start shooting. [laughs]

JEFF JONES

What else do you recall about your days at The Studio?

Early one morning, I mean before sunrise, I went in there. It must have been sometime in 1978, I think, because by that time Michael and I had all but moved into the Studio, visiting our apartments occasionally only to pick up the mail. We would cross paths about this time of day because I slept at night and Michael slept . . . well in 1978 he was a very important sleeper.

On this memorable morning, as I opened the big horizontal steel lock on the big steel door, I found Michael crouched behind his drawing table, now swung into a vertical position, with a gun. A pistol. "Welcome to Desolation Row," he said as he peered with one eye over the top of the table.

I have to back up a month to say what led up to this seeming desperate situation. From the time we moved into the Studio in June of 1976, Michael came some months later, we heard scurrying noises in the quiet hours of the night. Mice. Well, at first some of us thought they were cute and some of us didn't. By the time the mice added chewing on artwork, stacks of posters and electrical cords to their scurrying, (one mouse was discovered stiff and dead with it's teeth still clamped to an extension cord) we all decided they weren't cute anymore.

But we being peaceful children of the sixties, "death to the mice" was not an immediate option. It was decided that the answer was "Have-a-Heart" traps that would capture them alive. Then what? Well Michael

and I acquired an aquarium to house the mice in, sort of like pets. We couldn't find authentic "Have-a-Heart" traps but got some pirated copies at the local hardware store. Needless to say these didn't always work properly.

The mice we caught were put into the aquarium and fed peanut butter. One midnight we decided the aquarium was full enough. We took it down the elevator from our 12th floor aerie to the lobby and out into the night. Across the street we went, feeling for all the world like saviors of mice, to an empty parking lot. Buildings rose tall and dark on all sides of us and I guess we wondered where the mice would end up. But that would be somebody else's problem. As we tipped over the aquarium with a stick, all the mice swarmed out into the night. Yes, swarmed. They moved as a herd, a dark mass, back across the street and back into our building.

So there was Michael behind his drawing table. He had been sitting for hours behind his drawing board with his pistol, a BB gun, watching as a mouse would creep along the far wall beneath the radiators. "The BB's don't really kill them," he explained. "They just get stunned."

"What do you do with them?" I asked.

"I put them in a paper bag and drop them out the 12th floor window," he smiled.

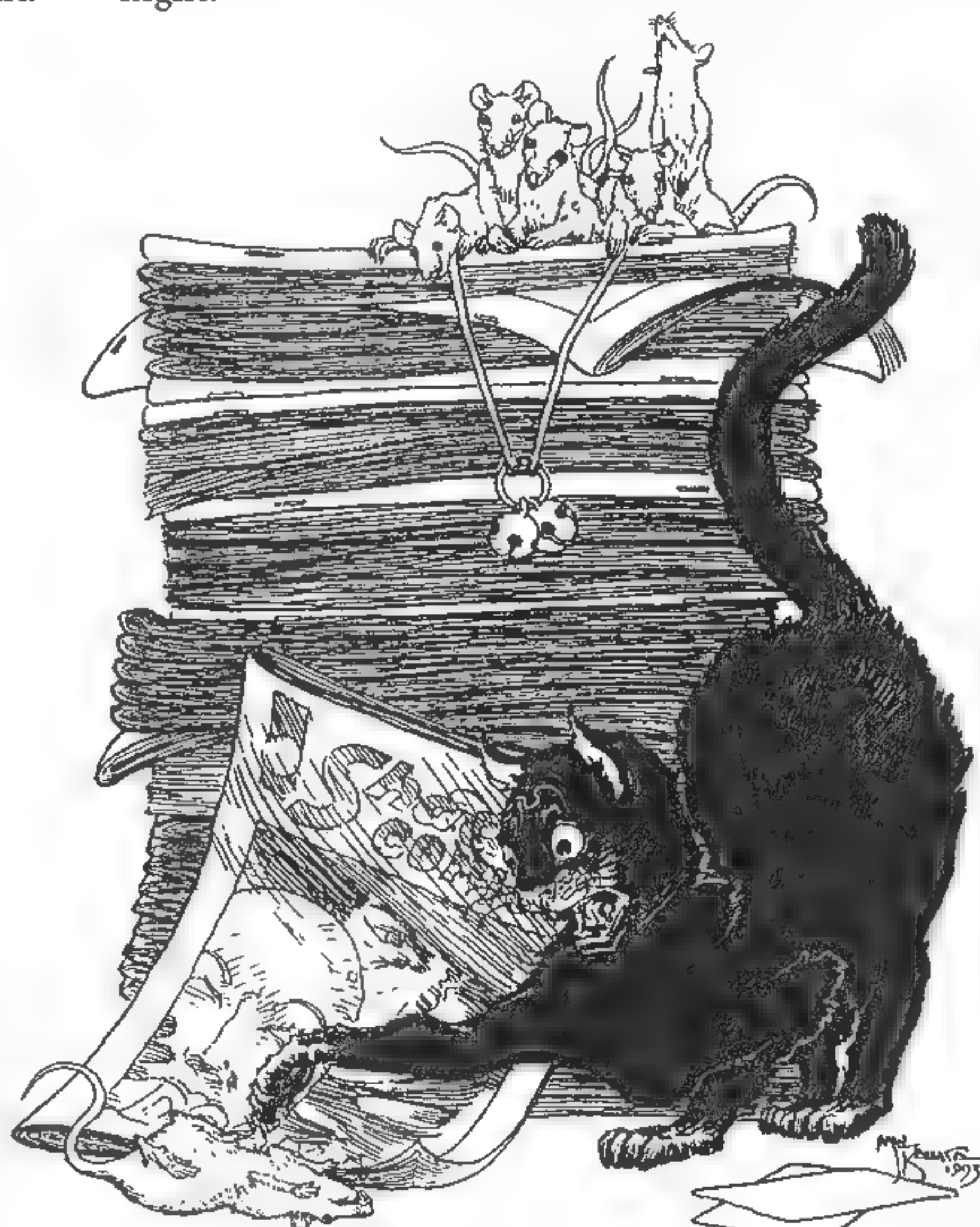
BERNIE WRIGHTSON

Do you remember there being a problem with mice in the studio?

Oh, yeah. [laughs] We had this great space on the top floor of this old building on 26th Street. Downstairs from us was a printing firm and there was also a group of silversmiths; I'm not sure who else was in the building. We had this great loft on the top floor. It was an old New York building, not particularly clean, and we did have mice up there. The first thing we did to try to control the problem was to get some traps and some poison and spread that around. We caught a few mice but Barry's girlfriend Linda, who was a very sweet kindhearted girl, could not stand the thought of us killing the mice. So we stopped doing it when she was around. We bought a bunch of these "Have-A-Heart" traps, caught the mice live, and put them in this old aquarium I had. It had a screen lid and we put some wood shavings in it, and bought mouse food and a water bottle and everything. These were wild mice, and they were up all night long and they would jump from the bottom of the aquarium to the screen top, and they'd be walking upside down on the screen top and make all this racket. We had maybe twelve or fourteen mice in the aquarium and it was really getting crowded in there. So, we decided we were going to turn them loose. I remember it was February; it was really freezing cold. Michael, Jeff, and I decided to take the mice out of the aquarium and bring them down to the park, Madison Square Park, which was just a few blocks away. We figured that they would be happy, they would have trees and grass and stuff. These were wild mice and no one really wants to touch them and risk getting rabies. So Jeff gets these two long pieces of heavy cardboard and tapes them together and makes these big tweezers. We opened the top of the aquarium and as he reaches in to grab a mouse, two or three other mice run up the tweezers, up his arm, and get away. So we knew this wasn't going to work. Somebody had the idea to carry the whole tank to the park. We go outside, and this wind hits us, it was like a 40 m.p.h. wind, freezing cold, the wind chill must have been about 3 below and nobody wanted to walk all the way up to the park. There was a big empty

parking lot across the street and we just took them over to the parking lot, upended the aquarium and dumped all the mice out. They hit the ground running, turned around, and ran right back to the building. [laughs]

I remember coming in one night, very late . . . Barry and Jeff were the daytime guys. Michael and I usually worked at night. I was out doing something and came back at around 2:00 am and all the lights are out in the place except for one lamp, hung from the ceiling by a long wire, casting a spotlight on a piece of cheese, or a piece of bread in the middle of the floor. Barricaded behind a bunch of pillows and cushions off to one side was Michael. As I came in he's shushing me and I go over and crouch down behind these pillows with him and he's got a pellet gun, and he's waiting for the mice to come out attracted by the bait. We took turns and we shot like six of them that night.



A cat! If only they had thought of it!

Editorial cartoon for *Art Collectors* newsletter.

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BARRY WINDSOR-SMITH

Do you remember a mice problem at The Studio?

"Mice problem at The Studio?"

Surely this is a mistake. Did you mean *Nice Problem*? There certainly was a "nice" problem, almost nobody was nice. That can be a problem.

Perhaps you meant *Rice Problem*? No, no — we were all pretty much french fries men at The Studio. Baked potatoes were good, too, but not all the time.

Lice Problem? No, not at all, what are you trying to imply?

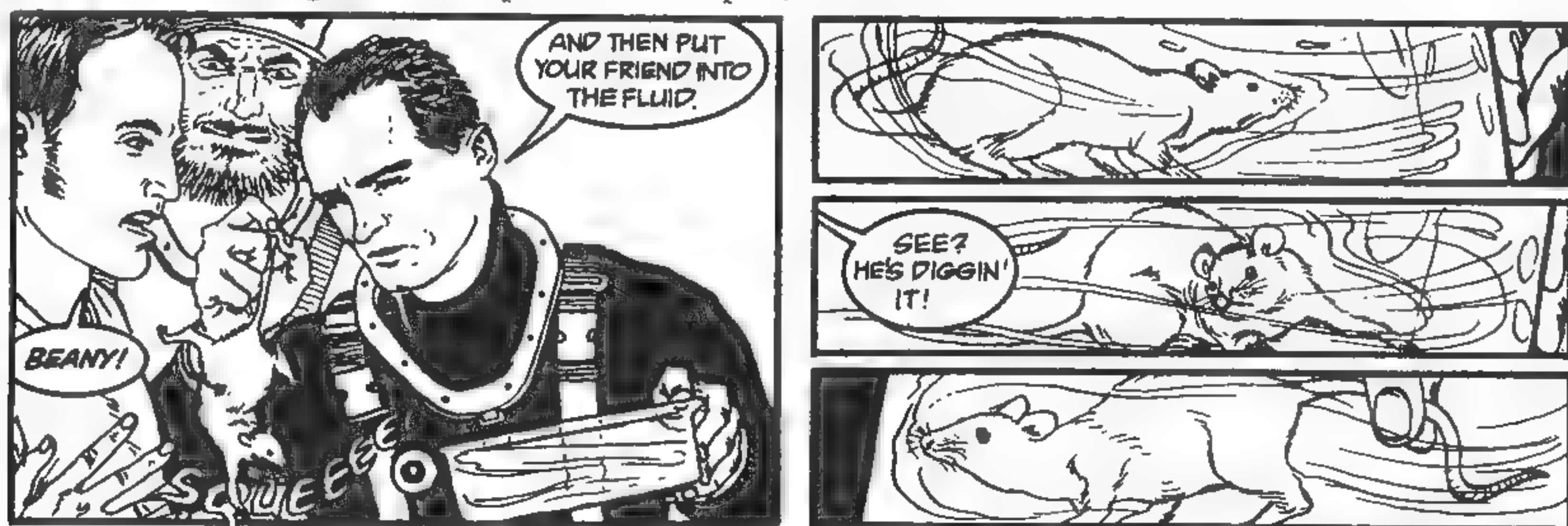
Dice Problem? *Vice*?

We did have "mice" at The Studio, I admit, but there was no problem to speak of, in that they were happy little creatures who had a particular taste for The Devil's Lake; they could eat through entire stacks of the reproductions and never get bloated or have an upset stomach or anything like that. I recall that one of the mice died. It had nibbled on a Wrightson photoprint and, boom, just like that it was dead. No long farewell, no lingering sign off, not even time to wave goodbye, just died on the spot. This speaks volumes about Wrightson's art, of course, but that's not the subject at hand. Except for the fact that the mouse had died in Wrightson's section of the room. It laid there for days with crosses over its eyes and a morsel of that dreadful picture called "Mementoes" hanging out of its mouth. After a week or more I asked Bernie how long he planned on leaving the corpse, now hollow and sunken, on the floor, and he answered "Til it gets sticky."

This Wrightsonian quote rather tends to answer the question about our relationships during that time.

MICHAEL KALUTA

Jeff seems to have amalgamated several of our studio stories into this one story — I never put the mice into paper bags. The paper bags were full of water and dropped out the window during a hurricane while we were having a studio party. I'm nowhere near as nice as he paints me, that's for sure! [laughs] Of course, the pellets didn't stun the mice when I hit them. I had a Crossman .22 cal pellet gun. When the pellet hit them, they were dead. The way the mice went out the window — well, once the mice were seen to be destroyers of art prints and books, I'd find the trapped mouse, hold the trap out the window, over the 12 floor drop, and open the little "Have-A-Heart" gate. I'm not proud in retrospect, but it was war.



From *The Abyss*, published by Dark Horse Comics.



How did you first meet Michael?

Back in 1967, he was working at the art supply department at a store in Alexandria, which is where I lived. I had gone up there and we had talked briefly because I was buying illustration board and of course illustration is a pivotal subject. Later my mom was up there buying frames for this woman's paintings that she sold for her, and they got to talking. She was saying, "Oh yes, my son does that kind of art." Then I went up there and started hanging around with Mike and talking. Later I went down to visit him at RPI down at Richmond where he was going to school. We walked around the campus and I thought RPI was really cool. It looked like the Haight-Ashbury part of San Francisco. I liked it so much that I decided to apply at RPI. I got accepted and we spent all our time down there staying up all night and drawing and sleeping through classes.

You both had common interests.

We were absolutely enthralled by Roy Krenkel and Frank Frazetta. That was the real shining light. Those two guys were responsible for everybody I know getting into the illustration business. There were those beautiful Ace covers that Krenkel and Frazetta would do. In 1967, we went up to a comic convention in New York and it was the first convention that Frazetta had ever exhibited his work. We met Roy Krenkel there, and he was impressed that we had heard of Alphonse Mucha. So Roy Krenkel introduced us to Frank, he said "Hey these guys know about Alphonse Mucha."

Who got whom involved in the Graphic Showcase?

I think the way it went was that there was a coffee house on Broad Street called the Scarlet Griffin and Mike with his boundless enthusiasm was putting up these really scratchy (for him) prehistoric comic strips. He was making his own sort of Edgar Rice Burroughs comic strip which he talked to me about. He never could get the thing figured but he would talk interminably about this story. And every time he'd tell me about it, it was different.

This was The Eyes of Mars?

"The Eyes of Mars," by God, yes. I've still got a bunch of the original strips. We traded off; I forget what I traded him for.

Tom Long, who did *Graphic Showcase* saw the comic

strips and got in touch with him somehow and one thing led to another and I ended up doing a strip for them too. Tom was a great promoter of that kind of stuff and when I went down there he was very supportive too. The first drawing table I ever got Tom dragged over. *Graphic Showcase* came out and we got interviewed by the *Richmond Times Dispatch*. There was an article with a picture of all of us looking millions of years younger. Steve Harper was there too. Harper had never gone to art school but he would hang out down there with Mike.

How much did you keep in touch once Michael went up to New York?

Oh we were writing letters back and forth and calling each other on the phone when we could afford it. In those early days we would have talked every other day on the phone if we could have afforded it. But I would go up to New York and he would come down to Virginia and visit. Michael had this way of decorating his apartment by picking up stuff from streets and alleys and buying stuff from thrift stores. Just like Gene Shepard would talk about people decorating their apartment with stuff they'd find on the street in New York City. It was fascinating to go down there and see how he made this fascinating environment out of nothing. This was real ingenuity. That's what I remember about the old days.

What do you think is Michael's strongest point as an artist?

If he's captured by a story, he has this ability to actually live vividly in his imagination in the story. The way he could draw . . . Edgar Rice Burroughs for instance. Burroughs is the perfect post graduate course in illustration. What you get there is an outline, and if you're an illustrator you supply the rest. You're supplying eighty-five percent of everything in there, maybe more than that, really. Burroughs throws in lots of interesting little traps, arbitrary number of legs on animals; you know he's never happy with four legs on animals — it's got to be six or eight.

The Lord of the Rings, that was another thing Michael used to talk endlessly about. He would read that and he would be at the places he was reading about. I think that's why he liked to read as much as he does. The mysticism of being in a place that you

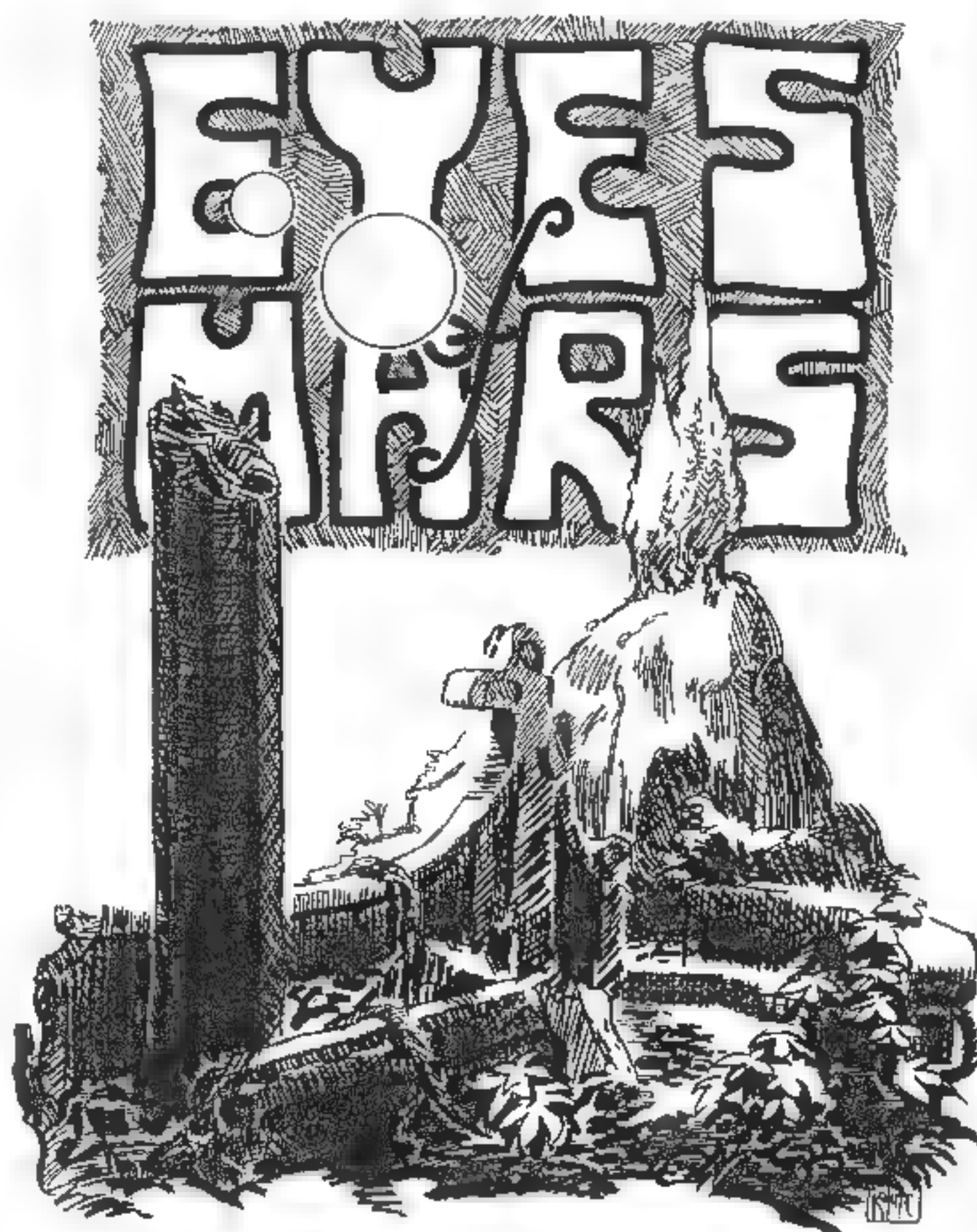
can visualize is of course the essence of all imaginative illustration. There's a lot of illustration that can be put together by posing models and stuff, that's basic illustration. But with imaginative illustration, you have to know a lot more about things and have a real vision that you follow. You can tell the difference between an imaginative illustrator and one that is technically competent but limited in their imagination, when you look at their work you. Michael is an imaginative illustrator. Plus, he also has an excellent sense of design. His instinctive sense of design, combined with his imagination, puts him up there with, in my opinion, Moebius, as being the two of the world class comic artist/illustrators. Moebius has that very mystical bent to him. Michael is more earthy but equally versatile, maybe even more versatile than Moebius. Of course, they

go in their different directions, but I would put them both on the same plateau. I don't think there's

anyone that comes close to them. For sheer versatility and being idiosyncratic those two have really got it.

What do you think is his best work?

It would be hard to pick one. When he's warmed up to doing oil paintings, he's brilliant. I wish he would do more of them. The surface of his oil paintings are really interesting. He generates a surface like nobody else. He's very modest about his paintings and sculpting. I like the Tolkein calendar he did five years ago, which considering the time he put into it, it's amazing. These are some of the best Tolkein illustrations ever done in that. Some of them don't look quite finished but he only had two weeks to do all those things. It's an astounding piece of work. ♦



This is the first installment of a continuing adventure, born of the memory of certain writings I need not mention. I offer no excuse for the lack of scientific truisms, my knowledge in such matters being severely lacking.

Eyes of Mars © & TM 1999 Michael Kaluta. All rights reserved.

AL WILLIAMSON

I'd like to ask you a few questions about Michael Kaluta. Who? [laughs] Michael Kaluta? He has no talent, can't draw, I don't know, what are you going to do with a guy like that? [lots of laughter] What do you want to know? Hey, if you print that, you better put a lot of laughter, because if you read that without the laughter it's not very nice! [laughs]

You noticed his talent very early on.

Oh yeah. I saw his work in the late sixties, and it was very, very good. I liked it very much. It reminded me of Roy Krenkel's work. I think it was a John Carter of Mars type story he was doing. It had a good feeling of Edgar Rice Burroughs in it. He was very, very good. He's okay now, but he was very good. [laughs]

Just kidding, just kidding.

What do you think is Michael's strongest point as an artist?

Well, he's a hell of an illustrator. He really gets the feeling of what he's doing, and the reader can get the feeling. When he does a guy coming out of a doorway, it isn't just the drawing of a guy coming out of a doorway. You really get the feeling of where the guy is, and Michael puts you in there. He sets the stage for the reader. He makes you part of the drawing, part of the illustration. He gets the feeling of what the writer has in mind, which is hard to do. But he can do it. He's one of the best.

How did you first meet Michael?

In the fall of 1979 I was with my sister in a restaurant called the Library in New York City. Susan and I had a whole pile of science fiction magazines with us because we were going to do a science fiction play called *Starstruck*. Michael was over at the bar with his sketchbook and he walks over and says, "Are you girls science fiction fans?" Then he said, "I'm an artist," and he flips through his sketchbook and shows us some sketches. After he went away my sister said, "He's probably a cab driver who draws in his spare time." But I had taken his card and went home and put it in my card filer with a little note that said, "Artist — might be of help on next show." Then next month I was in West Side Comics and I saw a poster for *The Studio* book. There was a picture of a painting that I just loved that had been a back cover on an issue of *Heavy Metal*. It was called "The Fate of Dollies Lost in Dreams" and I saw the name under it, Michael Kaluta. I thought, "It's the guy I met in the Library!" We were doing another play at the time and I called him and told him I would leave him complimentary tickets at the theater for our play. He came the last night of the play and saw it. He hung around afterwards and we chatted a bit. Soon after I went over to see his work and we clicked. I really loved his work, and we talked him into doing some work for our next show. At first he said he would do the poster, and gradually we added the costumes, and then added the set, so he got hooked in. So that's the story. I think he was just trying to pick up some science fiction fan girls. [laughs] But it turned out to be so much more.

What was it like working on the comic book version of Starstruck?

When we were doing the comic book we were so into

it. I was over at Michael's place all the time. We would stay up for days in a row creating this universe. It wasn't like other comics I've done where I've written a script, sent it to the editor, who likes it or doesn't, and eventually it's sent to the artist. Michael and I worked on *Starstruck* together, just sitting in the same room scripting and laying out and drawing. It was just so much both of us, so intermingled, and so much of what we had wanted to do. And I think we succeeded in doing what we wanted. It is a dense story, part of it told in the art, part of it told in the words. A lot of times what's being told in the words

and what being told in the pictures is not the same thing. The people aren't telling the truth about the story in the words because you see something different happening in the pictures.

Why do you think you and Michael work so well together?

I think we have a similar sense of humor. I grew up in North Carolina and he grew up in Virginia for the most part, so we have that southern connection, and then met in New York City. We like a lot of the same things. It's really hard to say. It's one of those things where you meet someone and you just click. Michael's probably my best friend.

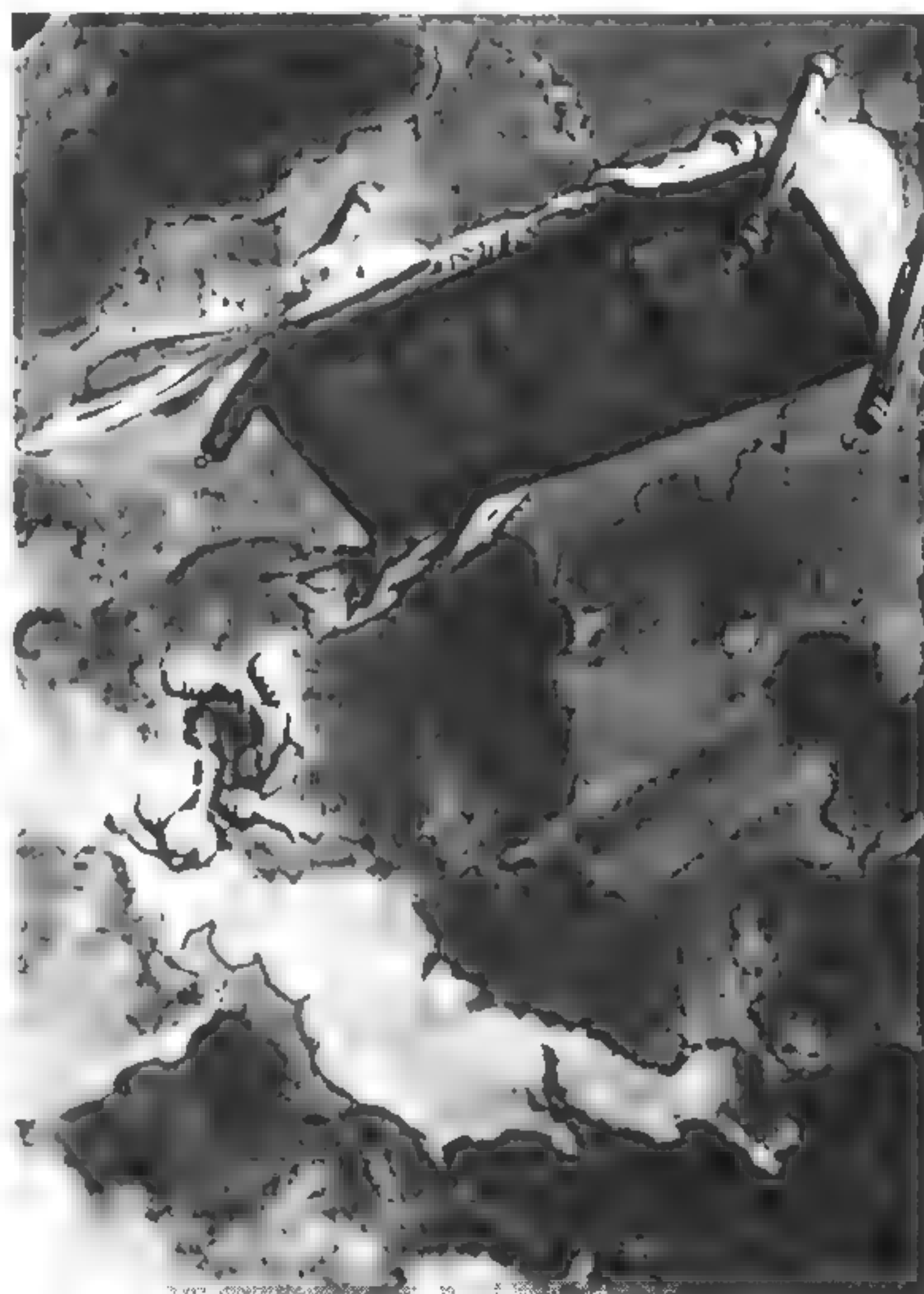
Do you have a favorite piece

of artwork that he's done?

I love anything from *Starstruck* because that's what we did together. And I love "The Fate of Dollies Lost in Dreams," the little girl on the flying bed and her dolly is falling; that's one of my favorites. I love all of his work.

What would you say is his strongest point as an artist?

I think when Michael paints a scene he not only sees



The Fate of Dollies Lost in Dreams © & TM 1999 Michael Kaluta. All rights reserved.

that piece of the picture that you're seeing when you look at the painting, but he also sees everything around it and everything inside it. If there's a castle in the background, he's drawn a floor plan of the castle. He knows where the secret passageways are. If he draws a little side street, he knows where it's going and what's inside the little curio shop that's down at the end of it even though you never see it. And I think knowing all of that makes his work so rich; that fact that he actually goes into that kind of depth with it. Nothing's ever there by accident with him. If there's a bracelet on a character's arm he knows where it came from, and who gave it to them and what it means. He has more depth than most artists because of that.

Is there anything that you'd like to add about Michael as a person?

The thing that I think is the best about Michael, the very best, is that he's very self aware. He sees his own faults, and he's one of those people who changes, and there aren't many people who do. He changes and gets better, and if he decides there's something about him that could be better he goes about making it better. That's true of his work and that's true of him personally. You don't get bored with him because he changes and grows. I think people get to a point in life where they're either going to get better and keep growing, or they stagnate and they do what they did in their twenties over and over again for the rest of their lives. And you can see who is who. Michael is one of those people that keeps learning and growing and changing and never stops. ♦



Galactic Girl Guides © & TM 1999 Elaine Lee & Michael Kaluta. All rights reserved.



From *My Name is Paris*
artwork © & TM 1999 Michael Kaluta. All rights reserved.

PAUL CHADWICK

You have described yourself as his "number one fan." What is it specifically about his work that you enjoy? This is a large question. Partly it's the way Michael incorporates so many of the virtues of fin de siècle art into his work. The late nineteenth century was a culmination of Western artistic development, where realistic drawing and graphic design were at a high point, before photography and other technologies devalued many of the hand-skills which artists of that time possessed. There is a set of aesthetic attitudes that grow from those skills, and Michael is as closely in touch with those as anybody alive.

There's a level of intricacy in much of Michael's work that puts each piece just beyond perception as a whole. I look at those *Prince Valiant* covers he did a few years ago, and many of his ongoing *Books of Magic* covers, and I just can't take them in. Instead, they invite me into them, and I wander about, dazed but happy.

He's inspiring to a fellow like me whose art has never quite reached the level of his personal tastes and aspirations, because he's just gotten better with time. He has grown into his style. A friend once quoted Michael, "I can't draw beautiful lines, so I have to draw beautiful things."

That may have had some relative truth in his younger days, compared to his more facile Studio mates. But now all the beautiful Art Nouveau design elements, the cloth patterns and antique bric-a-brac and oriental lanterns and old cars that he's made part of his internalized vocabulary are drawn masterfully indeed, and what began as a compensation strategy has become the secret weapon of a master draughtsman. His work overwhelms me a little.

Is there a specific piece of work that is your favorite? What is it about that work that you like so much? I look forward to the next *Books of Magic* cover as much as anything. Michael's doing his finest work today. I have sentimental attachments to some early

work, including particular illustrations for *Amazing* and *Fantastic*, and a strip he did for *Infinity*, "As Night Falls." His Tolkein calendar was a collection of masterpieces, which received unworthy reproduction . . . they should be seven-color fine art lithographs. *Metropolis* was a knockout. Though he contends it was rushed, I loved his Shadow film adaptation. There's also a particular image from his first trading card set . . . "Trooper," a fine pencil rendering of a futuristic soldier carrying a child, partially colored, which somehow moves me.

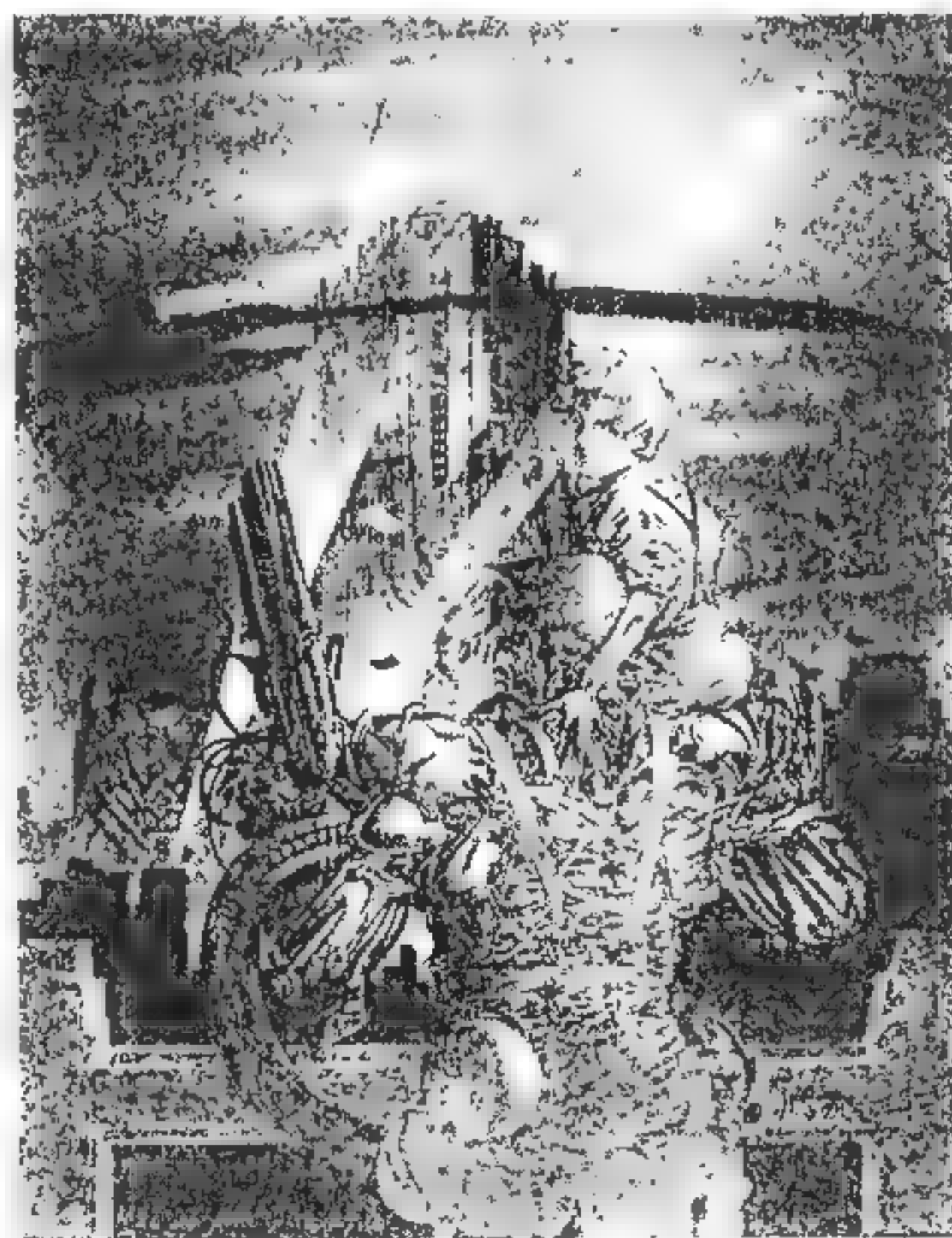
Is there something that Michael does or makes look easy, that as an artist you wish you could do (or at least have it come easy)?

Definitely his symmetrical, Art Nouveau bordered spectaculars, such as the Dragonlance covers. It would be nice enough if he was just knocking off Mucha, whose visual territory is so vast and wonderful that a revisitation is always welcome. But Michael has his own idiosyncratic repertoire of shapes, and throws in erratic non-sequiturs, and has made the repetition of elements to form patterns — a score of overlapping hands, a dozen jostling masks — into a specialty (see those Angel images made for that card game) . . . it's a density of visual experience that thrills me.

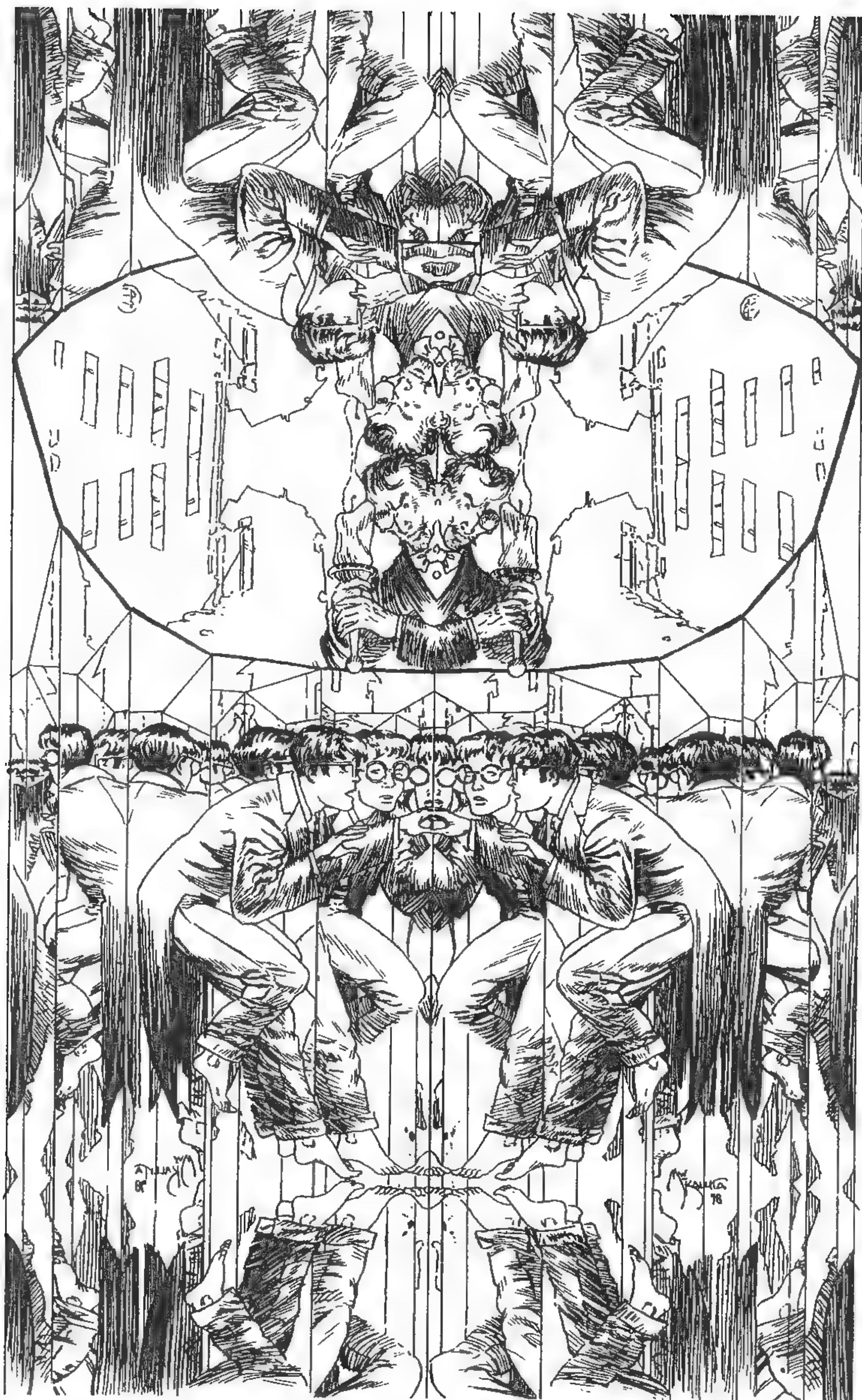
Following his lead, I've started to compose some of my work on successively detailed layers of tracing paper before drawing

the final art. But nothing I've done approaches the sophistication of his work.

I also envy his grasp of technology. He once told me it came partly out of growing up on airbases and wandering about the aircraft graveyards, figuring out how the complicated linkages of retractable wheels worked, studying the shapes of engine cowls. Truth be told, I've been borrowing some of his shapes from his *Bill the Galactic Hero* illustrations for *The World Below*. Thanks, Michael!



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Drawing for the cover to *The Books of Magic* # 58. *The Books of Magic* © & TM 1999 DC Comics. All rights reserved.



Pinup from *Batman* #400. *Batman* © & TM 1999 DC Comics. All rights reserved.

LURENE HAINES

You have said that Michael Kaluta was "very influential in my art career interests." How?

When I was a teenager, with a consuming interest in art (thanks to exposure to Frank Frazetta's work) I stumbled across the book about The Studio. I totally fell in love with Michael's work. The rich layered quality of his work, combined with his obvious technical expertise was absolutely fascinating. It inspired me to pursue a type of artwork that had never been supported or encouraged in my limited exposure at that point.

Of the many works he has done, what would you say is your favorite? Or if you can't narrow it down to a particular work, what type of project that he has done do you enjoy the most? Book illustrations, comic books, etc? It is impossible for me to choose only one work. So

much of what he has done is so incredibly inspiring. I am particularly partial to his book illustration and especially his fantasy and Sci-Fi theme work.

Do remember the first Kaluta piece that you saw? What was special about it?

I saw so many pieces in one fell swoop that it was like a great feast. I came away stuffed, yet hungry for more!

Is there anything else you would like to add?

Michael is one of the truly nice "greats" in the business. He's always made me feel welcome, a part of the art community, even from the very beginning before I was established. He is a wonderful person and I'm proud to call him a friend.

DAVE STEVENS

How did you first meet Michael?

I first met him in 1977, (at a party suite in the old El Cortez Hotel) at the San Diego Comic Con. He'd just come in on a red-eye flight from N.Y., it was around 2:00 am. We soon found ourselves comparing notes on our peripheral involvement with the *Star Wars* ad campaign (the film had just been released that spring), and other art-related things. I remember jabbering away most of the night. A meeting of the minds, you might say.

What do you think is his strongest point as an artist?

His sheer inventiveness, without a doubt; coupled with an unbridled sense of wonder and limitless imagination. His choices are always unexpected and infuriating. Whimsy is also a secret weapon, employed in nearly everything he's ever done. His women are sublime, other-worldly. His fanciful creatures come from his own private *Kaluta-zoo* (no two breeds alike!). His architectural alchemy would make Roy Krenkel do the Charleston. In short, he's got *all* the marbles — I hate him!



A member of the *Kaluta-zoo*
"The Legacy of Lehr"

artwork © & TM 1999 Michael Kaluta. All rights reserved.



Cover from *Thrilling Science Tales* #1 © & TM 1999 AC Comics. All rights reserved.

MIKE MIGNOLA

When did you first become aware of Michael's work?
I started out reading Marvel comics, I didn't even look at DC Comics, so I was unaware of Michael for a long time. When that book *The Studio* came out I was familiar with Wrightson and Barry Smith. But Jeff Jones and Kaluta — that book was my first introduction to a lot of their work. Now when I look at that book again, the guys I'm most interested in are Jeff Jones and Mike Kaluta.

Why?
I think because I can understand what Bernie and Barry Smith do, but Kaluta and Jeff Jones both do things that I can't figure out *how* they do what they do. There's something so unique about both of them that's extremely frustrating. I can't do what Wrightson could do in those days, but I understand it. With Kaluta, there's a thing to his work that just drives me crazy. I look at his work and say, "What was he thinking about? How did he come up with that?" There doesn't seem to be this kind of logic to it that I think you get after working years in mainstream comics, for example, the way he contorts figures. It's not the naturalistic way John Buscema had of Conan swinging a sword.

You knew Conan was going to have his arm here and his leg is going to be there. Michael has this way of reinventing all different types of poses. In some places it almost becomes this grotesque distortion, muffled



Portfolio piece for Colleen Doran's *A Distant Soil*.
artwork © & TM 1999 Michael Kaluta. All rights reserved.

or springing out in some strange way, not in a Boris Vallejo body builder giant muscle way, but in this gnarled, tense kind of a way. You see it and say, "How did you get the arm like that? Why did you put the other arm in that position?" The poses are awkward, strange, and contorted but they end up working like crazy. The way he composes things, the imagery he packs into pictures, it's just . . . it's completely him. It's smart looking stuff.

He has a way of arranging objects interestingly. I think that's why of all the artists I grew up looking at, he's one who's still as interesting now as he was then. You see one of his covers and you go, "Wow! How'd he come up with that?" It's never just a guy sitting on a rock. It's a guy on a rock with this kind of reflection and all these objects arranged here and there. He takes what the job is and extrapolates out from that and brings in extra imagery that isn't in the story. If it has to do with the ocean, well then good, it's an excuse to pull out seashells and a bird and arrange it all in an interesting way that seems new every time.

Is there any particular work he's done that is your favorite?

It's really difficult to say. *The Shadow* was fine, but I like the work since *The Shadow* much better. I loved *Starstruck*. I think I'll always have a fondness for some of those first pieces I saw when he was doing the book illustrations and posters. I was discovering him when I was figuring out what I was going to do as an artist in the late seventies. So the kind of work he was doing then, I loved. He's a guy whose work is always interesting to me because I don't know what it's going to be. With almost any other artist, I have an expectation of what I'm going to get. But with Michael I have no idea of what I'm going to get, except that it's going to be something that'll have me scratching my head saying, "How the hell did he think that was going to work? And why does it?"

What did you think when you first met Michael?

I think he was probably one of the first big guys in comics that I met. I believe the first time I met him I went to his place. I was with some people that had to go there for some reason and to meet Michael in his apartment — it certainly was a fantastic experience. He lived the way I always thought artists would live. The apartment is so dense with objects and books and

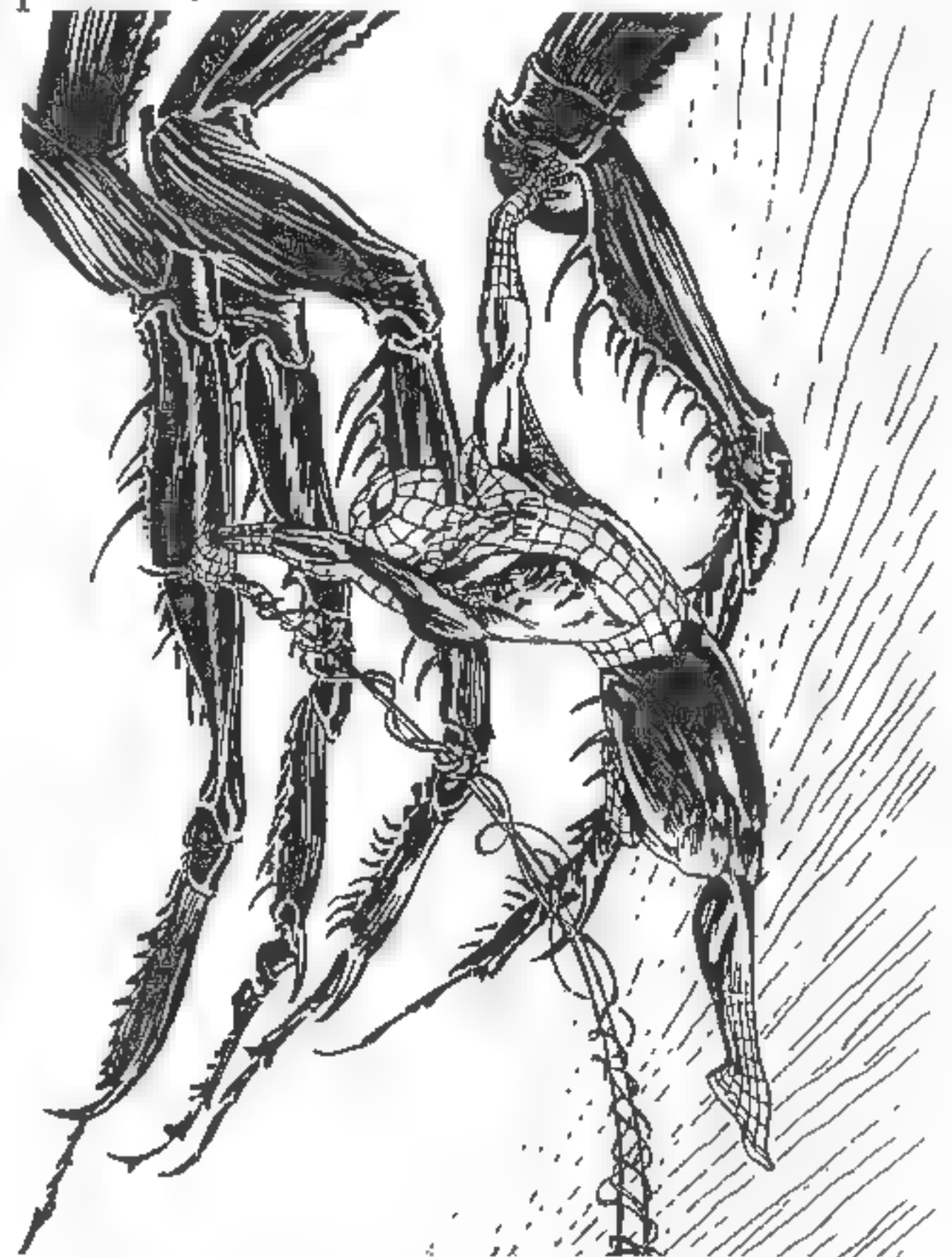
stuff. I don't think I have ever seen the place with all of the lights on. Maybe there aren't enough lights; I don't know. It's always got those dark shadowy corners with weird fake skulls, statues, and things peering out of the shadows. The quality I have always appreciated with Michael is that he was always very forthcoming and willing to talk about the old days. It seemed like he enjoyed talking about the things I was interested in; the '70's, the Studio days and stuff. Michael seems to like to hold court and tell stories about the old days. He has always been very nice to me. He's been very encouraging and very approachable, which, sadly, you can't say that about everyone in this business.

Did you ever ask him for advice when you were starting out?

Not really. I've shown him stuff and said, "What do you think?" But I don't ever remember getting advice from him. I always got that weird kind of smile that seemed to speak volumes. It always seemed to say, "You know what you are doing." His approval has always meant a lot to me.

What else would you like to add?

It's been a pleasure to know him. This is going to sound very sappy but I really appreciate that I have been able to spend time with him. It has always been a real pleasure. ♦



Spider-Man from the Marvel Masterpieces Collectors card series.

Spider-Man © & TM 1999 Marvel Characters, Inc. All rights reserved.



Drawing that appeared in a 1972 convention book. artwork © & TM 1999 Michael Kaluta. All rights reserved.



Max Faccioni © & TM 1999 Michael Kaluta. All rights reserved.

MIKE'S MEANDERINGS

by Mike Pascale

There's an old gag among comics pros that goes like this: What do you get when you mix an artist, illustrator and a storyteller with milk?

Kaluta and *cream*! (*rimshot*)

Oh, okay — it's not an old joke. I just made it up. But it tells you what's so special about Michael Kaluta (and why I don't make a living doing stand-up).

Y'see, Kaluta is one of those select few who walk the undulating, ultra-fine line between those three creative disciplines — and is equally facile at all of them.

My first exposure to his refreshing and unique style was (like most comics fans, I suspect) DC's version of *The Shadow* back in the 1970's. At the time I knew little about the character and cared even less. But thanks to Kaluta's genuinely noirish portrayal (before Frank Miller and every wanna-be jumped on the bandwagon and rode it to death) and his signature art/storytelling, I began to care about Mr. Cranston and Ms. Lane — a lot. Which is why I was bummed when Mike left the series after just four issues (ironically, another trend adopted by many of today's big artists!)

But with just those four books, he made his mark. He was "hot." And justifiably so.

Later, as we all know, he joined with fellow stylists Jeff Jones, Berni(e) Wrightson and Barry Windsor-Smith to form The Studio, a creative alliance that yielded, among many wonderful works, a beautiful coffee-table book of the same name. And what a book it is!

Here was all the aesthetic evidence needed to cement the name Kaluta into the comics/fantasy art Hall of Fame: composition, design, decoration/ornamentation, color, lighting, mood, even social commentary — every one of these aesthetic fundamentals were employed by Kaluta with nothing less than impactful success.

As for storytelling, one needn't look any further than those gorgeous Shadows, as well as his "Carson of Venus" and *Starstruck* stories to see that the guy can

tell a tale with the best of 'em.

And I haven't even mentioned his most outstanding artistic virtue: his imagination! As Kaluta himself put it so adroitly: "Some will trade imagination for style, some style for imagination. My imagination is my style." Talk about an understatement! Just check out any of his paintings and you will see a mind alive and vibrant with myriad images, colors, themes, places and emotions. Hell, before Kaluta, about the only way you could see this stuff is if you did acid!

This is what makes fantasy art so special, so individual: it's what the artist sees in his mind's eye, blended with his aesthetic and personal influences and then communicated by his skill into a tangible piece so that others may view — and experience — that vision. It is this ability to coalesce divergent realities into one aesthetic whole that makes the fantasy artist stand out amongst his more literal-minded peers; and it's his particular mind's eye and communicative talent that makes Michael William Kaluta stand out amongst his fantastic comrades.

Where else in the art field can you see a synthesis of everyone from Klimt to Kley, Mucha to Frazetta, yet look so unique as Kaluta's work does?

Sadly though, his comics work is all-too rare. I suspect, like many others of his talent and stature, the medium was just not financially or aesthetically rewarding enough, infested as it is with a "hot" artist mentality that arbitrarily pulls styles into and out of editorial flavor at the drop of a hat, forcing those who don't have that (false) commercial "heat" to either swallow their style and fall in line with the look du jour, or simply leave the medium for greener (in more ways than one) pastures.

What's really funny about the whole thing is that Kaluta has more talent, ability and individuality in one cell of his gray matter than most of those lemming-heads have in their art history-deprived brains.

And that to me is the biggest joke of all.

I wish Mike Kaluta the best, and look forward to more of his best work.

WHO ARE THEY?

Paul Chadwick Creator of *Concrete*; Paul has a new series out called *The World Below* which is published by Dark Horse Comics.

Joel Goss A prolific writer who has written books, film scripts, and radio material. He co-wrote several *Shadow* series with Michael Kaluta. He has had several articles published about Buster Keaton.

Lurene Haines Her artwork has graced many projects from *Green Arrow* to *Star Wars*. She has also written several books on working in the comic book industry.

Fred Hembeck Cartoonist whose work has appeared in the *Comics Buyer's Guide*, *Marvel Age* and *the Comic Reader*.

Steve Hickman An accomplished fantasy and science-fiction painter, Stephens work has graced the cover of many books including Larry Niven's *The Man-Kzin Wars* series.

Jeff Jones Acclaimed illustrator of science-fiction and fantasy. Jeff was one of the co-founders of The Studio.

Elaine Lee Co-creator of *Starstruck*, she also wrote the critically acclaimed *Vamps* mini-series for DC.

Mike Mignola Creator of *Hellboy*, Mike recently pencilled the *Batman/Hellboy/Starman* miniseries written by James Robinson.

Mike Pascale Creator of *Bru-Hed* and *Nasti: Monster Hunter*. Both are published by Schism Comics. *Nasti: Monster Hunter* #4 is due out in July.

Dave Stevens He began his career by working as an apprentice to Russ Heath. He is probably best known for creating the *Rocketeer*.

Ronn Sutton Ronn is a regular penciller for Claypool Comics' *ELVIRA, Mistress Of The Dark* as well as comics for other publishers.

Charles Vess Noted artist who has worked on many projects including collaborating with Neil Gaiman on *The Sandman* and on *Stardust*.

Al Williamson Since starting in the industry in 1948, Al has worked on a wide variety of projects including *Secret Agent Corrigan* and *Star Wars*.

Barry Windsor-Smith In the 1970's Barry Windsor-Smith rose to prominence with his work on *Conan*. His recent work includes the stunning *Storyteller*.

Bernie Wrightson In the 1970's Bernie worked on *Swamp Thing*. Since then he has gone on to work on such projects as *Batman*, *Punisher*, and *Aliens*. He recently did work for the movie, *The Faculty*.

WHAT'S ON DECK?

A Tribute To Archie Goodwin

It is Comic Book Profiles purpose to honor the past, present, and future of comic books and this issue on Archie Goodwin embodies all of those elements. Archie Goodwin had a tremendous impact on the comic book industry. He served as editor for Warren, Editor-In-Chief for Marvel, the editor of the entire Epic line at Marvel, and a group editor at DC. His stories are among the most loved and remembered of the past thirty years. The proceeds of this issue go to support the scholarship fund created in Archie's name at The School of Visual Arts in NYC. At the School of Visual Arts, students have the opportunity to earn a degree in cartooning, being taught by some of the best creators in the industry, including: Walter Simonson, Carmine Infantino, and Klaus Janson. Supporting this issue will ultimately help tomorrow's creators.



Comic Book Profiles Presents: A Tribute to Archie Goodwin, a special issue dedicated to the late comics writer and editor. Seventy-two pages of interviews, reminiscences, and original artwork, by both Archie and artists he collaborated with. This issue also includes a feature on the School of Visual Arts.

All proceeds from this issue will benefit the Archie Goodwin Memorial Scholarship at the School of Visual Arts.

Chris Claremont

Issue # 8 of Comic Book Profiles provides an in-depth look at writer Chris Claremont. In an extensive interview, Claremont talks about his career, from the *X-Men* to *Sovereign Seven* to the *Fantastic Four*. Claremont also gives his insights on the creative process and gives advice to would-be writers! This issue contains many supporting interviews from friends and associates that have worked with Chris Claremont throughout his career. And as always, this issue will feature all of the regular columns that you enjoy! All this, fifty-six pages in all, for only \$2.99. Order this issue from your local comic book store in July and look for it on sale in September.

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☐ **Yes! Sign me up now!** Please send me Comic Book PROFILES magazine for one year, (4 issues) Enclosed is my check or money order for \$12.00 made payable to : As You Like It Publications.

☐ **Yes! Send me Chris Claremont's issue.** Please send me Comic Book PROFILES magazine issue #8 featuring Chris Claremont. Enclosed is my check or money order for \$4.25 (\$2.99 + \$1.26 s/h) made payable to : As You Like It Publications.

☐ **Back Issues Please!** (All prices include shipping and handling charges)

☐ Neal Adams	☐ John Romita	☐ John Byrne	☐ Gene Colan
\$3.50	\$3.50	\$3.50	\$4.25

☐ **Archie Goodwin Tribute Issue** \$5.25 (see page 51 for details)

name _____

address _____

zip _____

Even if you do not wish to subscribe at this time, please take a moment and answer our survey. Thanks!

What three comic book writers would you like to see in Comic Book PROFILES?

What three artists would you like to see in Comic Book PROFILES?

What did you enjoy most about Comic Book PROFILES?

Suggestions: _____

Please send all correspondence to: As You Like It Publications,
P.O. Box 2055 Poughkeepsie NY 12601

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Announcements

Before we get to your letters, there are several announcements that I wish to make. First, as you have already undoubtedly figured out, in July we will be publishing *Comic Book Profiles Presents*; our special tribute issue on Archie Goodwin. Issue #8, featuring Chris Claremont will be coming out in September. Issue #9 will then be out in November. So for the remainder of the year we will be publishing on what amounts to a bi-monthly schedule. After November, things will be back to the normal quarterly schedule.

Speaking of Chris Claremont, his X-Men collaborator John Byrne will have a magazine out devoted entirely to him. The magazine is published by Jason Schifo and is called *The Byrne Victims Unite Quarterly*. For more info on what's going on with TBVUQ you can check out The Unofficial John Byrne Site at:

<http://www.acc.umu.se/~alpha/byrne/>

Or you can write to Jason at:

372 Pierson St., Apt. D Crystal Lake, IL 60014
Attn: TBVUQ

As we noted here last time, we now have a web site. The address is www.comicsfun.com/cbprofiles. In addition to finding out information about the magazine, there is also a links page with links for all of the creators that we have profiled and also some of the creators that have given us supporting interviews. There are also links to Fred Hembeck sites including one which features Fred's strips from the 1970's that he did for DC.

Speaking of web sites, it should be noted that the Utopic web site has moved. Its new address is <http://members.xoom.com/uticon>

We will be at the Ramapo convention in Spring Valley, NY on May 22, 1999. Guests slated to appear currently include; Al Williamson, Don McGregor, Ramona Fradon, Denny O'Neil, Kurt Schaffenberger, Dave Cockrum, Joe Staton, and Fred Hembeck. If you wish more information about the show, let us know and we'll pass it along.



LETTERS

Matt wrote the announcements, and then took off to see the Mets opening day at Shea, so I'm taking over the letter column this issue -TP.

How about - Carmine Infantino, Murphy Anderson, Jim Aparo?

Mike Jackson

Mike one of those three is currently slated for issue #9. If I were braver I would be bold and tell you; but I don't want to jinx it!

I just read your Gene Colan issue, and thought it was great. Gene has always been one of my favorite artists, and I consider him one of the "true" artists in the field. I recently emailed him my appreciation for his work, and received a very warm reply from him. One of my prized possessions is a sketch he did of Captain America. As far as your magazine goes, I'd say stick with the b&w cover. The cost of your book is one reason I read it; I can afford it! I also purchased your Wrightson issue, and enjoyed it very much. Keep up the great work!

Mike Bennett

Thanks, Mike. Gene is a terrific guy.

Dear Matt & Tina,

Wow, I don't know how you do it but you keep topping yourself issue after issue! The latest issue featuring Gentleman Gene Colan is the best yet, and the only reason I can figure is that the additional pages (and additional art) only made the experience that much more satisfying. What a treat to get to know this man whose work I've admired so much since those Marvel Silver Age days. He truly is a gentleman! Thanks for all your hard work and effort. It's clearly a labor of love.

Peter Wallace

This is the kind of letter that makes my day. As for us topping ourselves, well, we just keep trying to make the magazine better. We listen when people make suggestions. And you're right, it is a labor of love.

Suggestions:

Steve Rude, Adam Hughes, Dave Stevens, and Mark Schultz. Kevin Nowlan and Jose Luis Garcia-Lopez would also be great to see, since I never see interviews with those two artists. I liked the new how they create comics feature. The color cover doesn't matter. I like most of your other readers, would like to see a credit list in up-coming issues.

Jeffrey Bartoletti

I'd like to see a credit list too, Jeffrey. The problem is that it's difficult to find a list that is truly complete, and we do not have the time to do it ourselves. However, both the Grand Comic-Book Data Base (which is on-line; a link to this is on our web page) and Johnny Lauck's Comic Book Index are good sources to find out information on what a creator has worked on. Neither are complete at this moment but both are working on it!

Tina,

Yay! Gene Colan! My all-time second favourite comic artist (after Jack, of course.) VERY nice issue — my only complaint would be about the illustrations chosen to accompany the text. There were too many pieces from TOD 40-1 for my liking & I'd have liked to see at least one from the 1960's with the funny panel shapes — but maybe that's just a matter of personal preference. NO to colour. I buy it if I like the person featured, like most people. Keep the cost down & the readers happy. Suggestions (of course) Stan Lee, Steve Englehart & Steve Gerber (showing my age) & artists BW Smith, Tim Truman & Dave Sim. Steve Ditko would also be nice. Keep up the great work. At \$2.99 this really is a snip & deserves wider support. Oh, an independent theme issue would be great with people like Steve Conley & Carla Speed McNeil along with Sim. Or is it a strict one creator per issue?

Paul Hayward

No, our profiling one creator per issue isn't a strict rule. We just like to be certain that we adequately cover the featured artist (or writer's) career.

Congratulations on your best issue so far. The increase in page count has given the material more room to breathe, especially more illustrations. I look forward to future issues (is John Buscema on the cards? — he seems neglected, given his output, compared with contemporaries like Romita & Colan)

Geraint Davies

I would love to do an issue on John Buscema, but have had difficulty in contacting him. If anyone out there can help, please e-mail me.

Dear Comic Book Profilers,

Thanks so much for issue 6 and the Gene Colan profile. Mr. Colan is a great man and a great talent.

I'm a thirty-six year old attorney and I've enjoyed comics since the fourth grade. Through the years they've sustained and entertained me more than any other medium. However, as I've matured, my interest in comic books per se has waned in favor of the art form itself and the creative processes behind that art form. I

love learning about the people behind the books that so enthralled me. In that regard, I look forward to each issue of COMIC BOOK PROFILES. The only thing that could improve this already fine publication is the inclusion of more artwork.

Best Regards,

James King

We're working on it James!

Tina & Matt:

Just a quick note to say I loved your Gene Colan issue of "Profiles." I've been a Colan fan since I was a kid in the Sixties, and I had the pleasure of meeting him at a shop appearance in Massachusetts last year. I was impressed by how Gene took time to personally engage every fan who approached him, and he even took a long list of names home with him so that he could fulfill everyone's request for a personalized sketch. Gene absolutely deserved the tribute you and his colleagues paid him in "Profiles." Suggestions for future issues: the Buscema brothers — both in one issue; the Severin siblings — ditto; Gil Kane; Roy Thomas; Denny O'Neil; and how about Sergio Aragones interviewed by Mark Evanier — or vice-versa! Thanks for taking time and interest to profile these comics greats. For those of us who grew up reading Colan, Romita, et al in the 1960's and 1970's, these "Profiles" issues are a special treat.

Tom Field



Thanks for all your suggestions. Keep those letters coming!

Tina

Please send your letters to:

As You Like It Publications

P.O. Box 2055

Poughkeepsie, NY 12601

e-mail us at: CBPROFILES@aol.com.

HEMBECK'S FINAL THOUGHTS



IF THE PRICE IS RIGHT, SURE! I'D LOVE TO OWN ONE OF THOSE EXQUISITE "BOOKS OF MAGIC" COVERS! "STAR-STRUCK" WOULD BE SWELL ALSO--OR IS IT TOO MUCH TO DARE HOPE YOU HAVE SOME "SHADOW" MATERIAL AVAILAB--



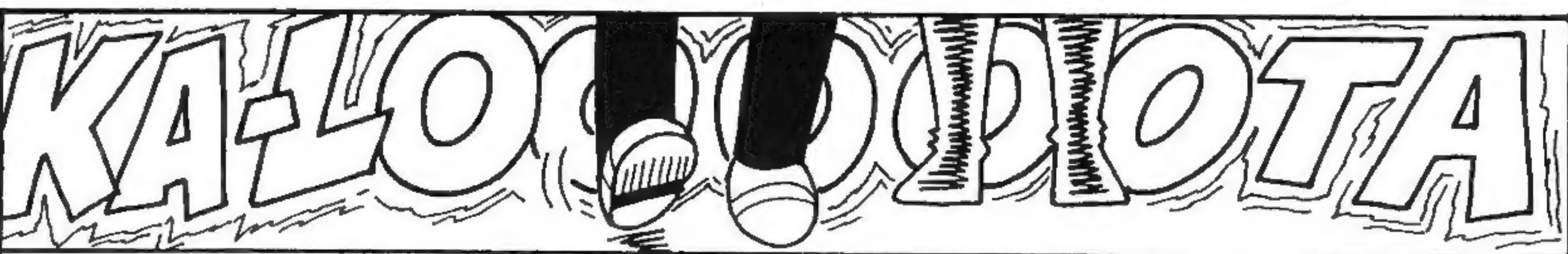
REMEMBER ME--THE BLACK HAND? MY EVIL PLAN TO CONTROL MINDS WITH THIS GIZMO? HELLO? IT ALL APPEARED IN "GREEN LANTERN-GREEN ARROW" #84!



IT DID? GEEZ, I MUST'VE READ THAT ONE, BUT--



THE DRUG ISSUES? YEAH, THOSE I REMEMBER!





COMIC BOOK

PROFILES™

The magazine about comic book professionals

p r e s e n t

A Tribute To Archie Goodwin

With contributions from family, friends,
and associates including: Terry Austin,
James Robinson, Paul Chadwick,
Jeph Loeb, Paul Levitz, Denny
O'Neil, Mike Carlin, Walt Simonson,
Louise Simonson, Al Williamson,
Kurt Busiek, Gene Colan, John
Workman, Mark Wheatley, Carl
Gafford, Paul Davis, Link Yaco,
Fred Hembeck, Mike Pascale,
and many more!



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Look for this special issue in July.